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THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL

ROBERT A. BAKER

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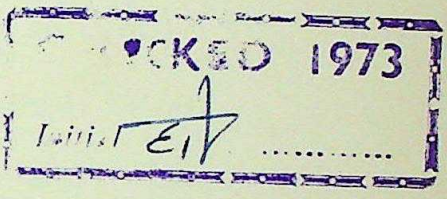

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THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL

By Ernest A. Baker, D. Lit., M.A.

Vol. I	The Age of Romance: from the Beginnings to the Renaissance
Vol. II	The Elizabethan Age and After
Vol. III	The Later Romances and the Establishment of Realism
Vol. IV	Intellectual Realism: from Richardson to Sterne
Vol. V	The Novel of Sentiment and the Gothic Romance
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THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL

By Ernest A. Baker, D. Lit., M.A.

Volume I

The Age of Romance: from the Beginnings to the Renaissance

New York
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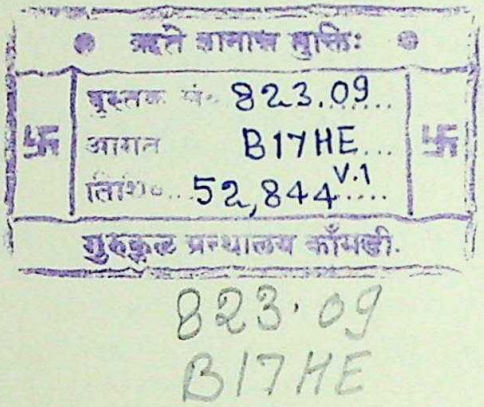

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PREFACE

THE present work is an attempt to trace the origins and growth of English prose fiction in the ages before the Tudor period, ages which have usually been dismissed as irrelevant to the study of the English novel. It will be followed by volumes dealing with *The Establishment of Realism—i.e.* the process of evolution ending with Richardson, Fielding, and their immediate successors—and *The History of the Modern Novel* from that time to this. The work is based largely on courses of lectures delivered at University College, London, in the School of Librarianship and the Department of English, during the years 1919-1924, and also on a doctorial thesis approved by the University of London in 1908, and on an immense amount of reading done in preparing various editions of the author's *Guide to the Best Fiction in English.* The author is indebted to various friends for useful suggestions and information, and especially to his friend Dr R. W. Chambers, Quain Professor of English Language and Literature, University College, London, for many valuable hints.

E. A. B.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Introductory—Definitions and Scope of the Novel—The Greek Romance and other forerunners of English Fiction	11
II.	Anglo-Saxon Fiction	50
III.	Origins of the Arthurian Legend	63
IV.	From Legend to Romance	82
V.	Chrétien de Troyes	108
VI.	Arthurian Prose Romance—Malory	148
VII.	The Matter of France	208
VIII.	Miscellaneous Romances	229
IX.	Popular Tales	259
X.	The End of the Middle Ages—Summary of the Rise of Prose Romance—The Beginnings of Free Invention and of Conscious Art—Comparison with the History of the Plastic Arts	295
	Reading and Reference List	317
	Index	325

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THE BEGINNINGS OF ENGLISH FICTION

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

The Novel

THE modern novel is a thing that everybody recognises at sight. In spite of innumerable varieties of method and manner, and differences in the appeal it makes to its readers, it stands clearly apart from any other literary form. Its medium is prose, not verse; as to content, it is a portrayal of life, in the shape of a story, wholly or in the main fictitious; as to its way of portraying life, though the pretence of exact reporting of indiscriminate detail is generally regarded as a mistaken kind of realism, and much latitude is allowed to plot and surprise, everything recounted is required to be credible, or at least to have a definite and consistent relation to the facts of existence. Some would have it that a novel is not a novel unless it has certain habitual features, such as a plot and love interest. But, since there are novels without them which have been universally acclaimed as among the best, there seems little reason for insisting on these alleged essentials. Most novels have them, some have done brilliantly without; but no work of fiction would be accorded the name of novel unless it were a prose story, picturing real life, or something corresponding thereto, and having the unity and coherence due to a plot or scheme of some kind or to a definite intention and attitude of mind on the part of the author.

The history of the novel must trace the evolution of the form

Now, if we look back along the perspective of works written in English beyond Richardson and Fielding, or, at any rate, beyond Defoe, we shall hardly descry anything that answers unmistakably to our modern conception of a novel. Romance there was both in prose and in verse, but it had little to do with ordinary life. There was also some prose fiction of other kinds; but it had no settled relation to actuality, and was as a rule very haphazard and uncertain of its aim, now being undistinguishable from a protracted apologue, and now from a moral discourse with imaginary illustrations from the life of the day, or from supposed history or biography. In early

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times the romance affects the airs of a chronicle, and the chronicle itself is ofttimes no more trustworthy than the romance ; whilst in later times we see Defoe's and other people's fictions deliberately framed to deceive, and not honestly addressed to the imagination as works of art. In brief, the early history of the novel is the history of something that is not yet the novel. That, however, is what would be expected in a study of the antecedents of any art form : the history of epic or of drama would present like paradoxes. For the history of a literary form cannot be taken satisfactorily as beginning at the point in time when that form is evolved and complete ; even later developments that do not radically modify the accepted type cannot be studied properly until the whole anterior process of evolution is understood.

Fiction in the general sense : gradual differentiation of prose fiction

Fiction is a word with a wider meaning. It includes not only the novel and the prose romance but also narrative poetry ; in a strict etymological sense it includes drama. The earliest fiction, except such legend as passed simply from mouth to mouth, was always in verse, for a literary form meant a metrical form. All through the Middle Ages, where our investigation begins, there was fiction in verse and fiction in prose ; and, for centuries, little inherent difference is to be found between that which happened to be written in prose and that which kept to the old-established mode. When, through various causes, prose, or unmetrical language, came to be an accepted vehicle for narrative, it was circumstances and convenience, rather than artistic considerations, that determined as often as not whether a romance or an amusing story was to be put into one form or the other. When the multiplication of manuscript copies became rapid and cheap, and a large reading public existed, the old tales began to be turned into prose wholesale. No doubt they had been related orally in some sort of prose often enough before ; but such prose had not been thought worth remembering, and certainly not worth the trouble of writing down. Verse, on the contrary, was not mere impromptu : it had cost effort to compose. Whether good or bad, it was literature. Finally, verse was easy to remember ; one copy of a metrical romance served the purpose of many reciters.

Thus the question of verse or prose was for the most part merely one of attire. That deep organic difference between a story that falls naturally into the language of daily intercourse and one that

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must needs be intoned in a highly charged, rhythmical diction was unknown, or but dimly apprehended ; and so it remained until, in the long process of time, a prose was evolved suitable for purposes quite other than prompting imagination or kindling emotion. When a matter-of-fact and critical habit of mind in writers and readers brought about this differentiation of a sober, logical, workaday prose, the clear differentiation of the novel, as a reflective study of life as it is, from such story-telling as might be in verse or prose indifferently, was bound to follow.

Definitions of the novel

Though we shall not come yet awhile to anything that fits the definition, it will be convenient at this point to review some of the attempts that have been made at different periods to define the novel, and single out one as a working formula. The circumstance that a definition of what constitutes a novel now may apply only in a rough and partial way to the older kinds of fiction will render it none the less useful as a means of comparison, and may help to explain why certain types proved infertile and became extinct, whilst others formed suitable modes of expression for the views of life characteristic of different periods, and survived, or at any rate had issue.

Such definitions as have been propounded from time to time by novelists or critics, whether of the novel or of prose fiction in the looser sense, show singular discrepancies both in the point of view and in the area surveyed. Bacon's "Feigned history" was meant to designate "Poesy," which, as he put it, "may be styled as well in prose as in verse." Taken along with the context, "Poesy" is found to be hardly synonymous with poetry, in the full sense, but rather with fiction, in verse or in prose—that is to say, with only a part of what we call poetry, together with much that we should not call poetry at all. Understood thus, the phrase is not without suggestiveness, and may be reconsidered later on. Fielding's offhand definition, "A comic epic in prose," is of course much too narrow in one direction, while Clara Reeve's "Picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it is written," is too narrow in another. There are other early efforts at a definition which, like Sir Philip Sidney's delimitation of the scope of drama, sound absurd now that the child has grown into a man. Professor Warren's statement, "A novel is a fictitious narrative which contains a plot," is dogmatic,

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and seems officiously to ignore the general assumption that the novel has to be a portrayal of human life.

Stevenson, in "A Humble Remonstrance," [1] one of the liveliest discussions of the subject, improves a phrase of Sir Walter Besant's into the compact description, "The art of fictitious narrative in prose." As an account of either prose fiction in general or novel-writing in particular, this is inadequate. Perhaps he thought it superfluous to speak of the matter handled, assuming it to be fully understood that the narrative must be one dealing with human life. Even so, not to mention that the novelist has to portray life as well as tell a story about life is to omit a most important item, perhaps the most important of all. As might be expected from Stevenson, the born narrator, his definition makes the story not only supreme over all the other elements of fiction but, like Aaron's rod, to swallow up the rest. Fiction is first and foremost story; but in the greatest fiction the story is subordinate to the rendering of life. As a fastidious craftsman, Stevenson would probably regard pure narration as a superior technical method to description, mental analysis, and dialogue, without, however, disparaging these essential elements—essential in any but the barest kinds of narrative. He would, no doubt, have admitted that in an accomplished and very successful piece of fiction direct narrative might occupy but a small place in comparison with these other elements. There might be scarcely anything in the shape of incident. His rightness is in the implication that drama, the act, the event, is all important; because to be really like life the picture must be dynamic and not merely static. But, as it stands, this formula of Stevenson's leaves the impression that narrative is for the sake of narrative. He remains content with a definition that could be accepted as sufficient only on the narrowest reading of the principle of art for the sake of art. He does not admit—at any rate he does not say—that fiction, like any other art, must have something to express, that narrative is "only the particular form of the expression."

The novel an interpretation of life

But a critical perusal of Stevenson's essay, the special subject of which is the practical methods to be followed by the novelist, the why and the wherefore of its invaluable maxims remaining at the back of his mind, gives the clue to a more complete definition, and one

[1] *Memories and Portraits*, xvi.

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agreeing with the most catholic appreciation of the many modes of novel-writing that have developed out of the ancient craft of telling a story. Fiction, being in prose, is a prose rendering—that is to say, a sober, intellectual and, in some degree, a scientific or philosophical rendering of life. It should be no mere reproduction of things or events, so far as words can reproduce them, but an interpretation. The novel, says Stevenson, "is not a transcript of life, to be judged by its exactitude; but a simplification of some side or point of life, to stand or fall by its significant simplicity." [1] Again, "From all its chapters, from all its pages, from all its sentences, the well-written novel echoes and re-echoes its one creative and controlling thought." [2] What does the simplification signify? Of what nature is this controlling thought? Evidently Stevenson, if he were pushed to it, would have had to concede that the art of fictitious narrative has an object, to convey what life means to the narrator, who simplifies in order to bring out meaning. Stevenson is virtually admitting all the time, though he leaves it out of his definition, that it has a definite subject, human life; and that the motive of fiction, when it has an implicit motive and is not a mere trade, is feeling about life. That the sole and sufficient subject is human life is axiomatic: Hans Andersen or Lewis Carroll may relate the doings of birds and beasts or elves and animated toys, and Mr Kipling the adventures of elephants or locomotive engines; but a moment's reflection assures us that they are engaged all the while on an interpretation of human affairs.

Our working formula will stand then as follows:—"The interpretation of human life by means of fictitious narrative in prose." There is a small practical convenience in avoiding, for the nonce, the provocative word Art, since it is at least debatable whether prose fiction is to be reckoned among the pure arts at all, and not as intermediate between art, working in the concrete, and science, which analyses experience, reflects upon it, abstracts, and presents the results in typical figures, arbitrary combinations, and ideal reactions. All fiction that is not a mere vapid dilution of something stronger and more significant, such as many of the prose tales decanted, with little sense of their true meaning and savour, from the

[1] *Memories and Portraits*, 5th edition, p. 297.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 284.

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poetic romances in the Middle Ages, is an interpretation of character or conduct or human history. There are all kinds of interpretation, from the unconscious reshaping of the simplest story-teller to the intellectual realism of George Eliot. Even *The New Arabian Nights*, or *Treasure Island*, or any other of Stevenson's tales in which the story element is preponderant, is certainly not narrative and nothing more: they interpret life in no uncertain way in the light of their author's theory of life. They give the prose view as truly as it is given in *Aes Triplex* and *Ordered South*, though it is left to us, if we so desire, to formulate that view in abstract terms.

Why prose? and what prose implies

In the same essay Stevenson talks at random on the question whether a novelist ought to choose verse or prose, and seems to think it is merely the alternative of a plain or a "noble and swelling" style. What is a novel?

> If you are to refuse *Don Juan*, it is hard to see why you should include *Zanoni* or (to bracket works of very different value) *The Scarlet Letter*; and by what discrimination are you to open your doors to *The Pilgrim's Progress* and close them on *The Faerie Queene*?[1]

But, unless ingrained habit or the spirit of the age has a steady preference for one mode or the other, the choice of a prose or of a verse medium is determined by the nature of the vision in the mind of poet or novelist. The one will use the creative language of verse, being irresistibly impelled thereto by the lyrical rapture of contemplating his ideal world. The novelist will use prose, because he is, in the main, engaged upon an intellectual scrutiny, calling for exact terms in his account of things that he sees every day, and abstract terms in which to set down the results of his analysis and reflection.

Fiction has at times, indeed, become so severely intellectual, so studious of fact and evidence, that novelists have mistaken their business and entirely confused the distinction between art and science. Zola went so far as to regard the novel as a scientific treatise making definite contributions to knowledge, not merely using knowledge for its peculiar purposes. He imagined himself as submitting the valid results of a piece of experimental research, with

[1] *Memories and Portraits*, 5th edition, pp. 378-379.

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all the apparatus of verification. But the only test available turned out to be the ordinary intelligent man's sense of verisimilitude. The novel may or may not be pure art; it is best regarded, perhaps, as standing somewhere between art and science, since its characteristic is to study its materials and record its observations in the same sober, positive way that a scientist would study his. At the same time it is not science. The imaginary experiment is not a real experiment. Nothing in it can be verified except by our intuitive sense of probability. Zola's doctrine is fallacious. Nevertheless the novel does present the results of a philosophical, scientific or, at any rate, an intellectual scrutiny rather than an emotional and lyrical view of life. That is why prose is its appropriate style and why there were no true novels until a prose suitable for scientific record and philosophic thinking was in common use.

Prose, however, need not be always prosaic. Censorious critics scoff at poetic prose and the aureate style; but, as Coleridge commended those poets who fashioned for themselves a neutral or flexible style, equal to all the demands of sober description, philosophic reverie, or lofty imaginings, so in the other medium of prose—we know from his own efforts in that direction [1]—he would have approved the flexible style of Meredith and Hardy, which can utter all the moods of a complex story, from quiet study of fact, and from conversation in a sedate key, to the highest flights of imaginative vision and of impassioned lyricism. The novel has extended its capabilities largely through cultivating a wide gamut of expression in prose; and Stevenson and his generation were responsible for the change.

Hence his remark on *Don Juan* can be taken up thus: Why refuse to class *Don Juan* among novels unless on the ground that it is much more than a novel? It is that much more which accounts for its being written in verse and not in prose, as Byron wrote his letters and journals, which were the prose stuff without the overplus. Byron is sometimes a poet, and there is a great deal of poetry in *Don Juan*. *Don Juan* is the satirical picture of a world, together with the romance and passion of a vehement personality—the novels of

[1] *E.g.* in *Anima Poetæ*, where he describes the things seen from his window, changes in the weather, the behaviour of trees, birds, waterfalls, etc., in a strikingly Ruskinian manner.

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an amateurish and slapdash Thackeray, to put it roughly, plus Byron. Being a novel, as well as much more than a novel, *Don Juan* was written, most felicitously, in a flexible style, that *ottava rima* which is a better tune for the recitative of drab or garish worldly life than any other metre, yet is at the same time as capable of tragic and poetic effect as Keats showed it to be in *Isabella*, and Byron himself in many parts of *Don Juan*.

Poetry creative; the novel analytical

The novel is concerned with the real world; it deals with facts or with things that are made as like fact as the novelist can make them. Its aim is to present a world as like as possible to the actual world, not to fashion a new one to the heart's desire. The kingdom of poetry, on the other hand, is not of this world, but of the spirit; it is not of temporal, but of timeless things—the world of enduring ideas, or, as the poet may conceive it, of absolute realities. Thus poetry is creative, whilst the novel is, primarily, not creative but analytical. Life is behind the poet, impelling and sustaining his imagination. It is in front of the prose artist, the object of his attention, curiosity, reflection; when he portrays it his motive is to bring out the meaning that it has for him. The poet, also, may have explored and pondered; he too may be not without science and systematised experience; but from this he turns away his eyes and strives to portray what is in himself.

Poetry is only indirectly a criticism of life, in that the ideal world it shapes forth gives a standard and criterion by which we cannot help judging and measuring life. In the same sense all ideals are a criticism of realities. The novel, on the other hand, is a direct interpretation, and of all forms of literature the one to which Matthew Arnold's famous dictum most accurately applies.

Relation of fiction to reality

The only truth demanded of the creators of poetry is imaginative integrity, truth to themselves. A narrower canon is imposed on the novelist; he is expected to be true to life—that is, to be always consistent with other men's experience of the world. Divers exceptions are allowed, which abundantly prove the rule. Thus satirists and writers of allegory and apologue are not bound down to a literal version of life; they are merely required to maintain a certain correspondence to fact, more or less distant, but always distant according to scale. Makers of pseudo-scientific and other

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fantasies usually palm off their impossibilities by a sort of leger-demain, diverting attention from what is incredible by a display of intensive realism in the circumstance. Another way of disguising the point where probability ends and the incredible is introduced is Defoe's trick of producing vouchers of authenticity, pretending that it is all matter of fact, and happened to real people, whose identity must, however, not be disclosed. It is saying to the reader : "This may sound unlikely, and does not tally with anything in your experience, but it is the actual experience of persons whom I could introduce you to, only it might be awkward." Defoe, with his bad old propensity for taking in the ingenuous among his readers, was merely dishonest. Swift had more discretion, and employed both the circumstantial method and the device of sham credentials in a perfectly artistic way, asking no more than poetic faith. Defoe's trick has often been used so as to make the reader very uncomfortable, and not quite sure that he is not intruding into the private affairs of individuals whose relations may be living in the next street. But the solemn show of careless veracity with which Gulliver is ushered upon the scene is delightful make-believe, and puts us into the right frame of mind to appreciate the deft touches of lifelikeness in the incredible things that follow.

The creative element in the novel

But, as "all prose has a poetic side," [1] so this prose art may be creative as well as analytical. The world of fiction, like as it is to the world of daily experience, is inhabited by figures such as few of us will ever meet with in the flesh. The great majority of these wonderful creatures are products of the realistic method ; they are concentrated or, if you like, expanded versions of human nature as we know it ; but there are some who seem to have come from another sphere at the all-powerful summons of the poetic imagination. These affect us differently, because they are not so much like the common stuff of humanity ; they overwhelm us, indeed, not less by their strangeness than by their intense vitality. In building up characters beyond the average of our experience the novelist, however, has resources more properly his own, even if these do not always suffice. The regular prose method is to put together a larger, more complex, more eccentric, or more subtle being out

[1] Croce, *Æsthetic*, trans. D. Ainslie (1909), iii., 42. *Cp.* "There exists poetry without prose, but not prose without poetry."—*Ibid.*, p. 43.

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of the raw materials supplied by life. We recognise the creator's truth at every step, but the cumulative result exceeds anything within our ken. Manifestly, his knowledge, his divination, his training are superior to the ordinary man's; yet we do not take his discoveries or his creations on trust, but, watching the process of exploration or of portrayal, we learn and are convinced by the truth of every detail. This is the way in which such characters as Squire Western, Commodore Trunnion, Mr Collins, or the Karamazov brethren come to life in our imagination. They are the authentic results of a critical study of real life, and we are impressed even more by their profound truth than by their strength, their humour, their beauty or charm of personality.

It is difficult to put one's finger on the point where this realistic procedure is no longer sufficient, where the novelist begins to assert further rights of creative energy; but fiction of all periods abounds in characters, and also in sentiments and passions, actions and agonies, that carry us into the ideal world of poetry, whether they have their origin in the world of human experience or not. Rabelais' monsters, the extravagances of Cervantes, Bunyan's shining ones, such strange symbolical figures as those in Poe's and Hawthorne's tales—all these are obviously beyond general standards of comparison. But, in a different way, the beings akin to primeval myth in *Wuthering Heights*, Dickens's innumerable grotesques, the more extraordinary characters and incidents in Meredith's novels, and many things in fiction which we pass over without much surprise, also transcend ordinary experience. We accept them without challenge; but it can hardly be because they are like what we have seen for ourselves, nor because they bring in their hands signed credentials: we do not accept them as documented facts, any more than we recognise them unhesitatingly on the strength of the general verisimilitude. In fine, these are not denizens of the real world at all, nor direct results of the critical study of life; they are creatures of poetry, and make their mark on our faith by precisely the same means as Puck and Ariel or Falstaff and Lear stamp themselves real. When they occur in fiction they clearly attest that the novelist is not strictly circumscribed by prose limits. His staple material is the stuff of

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experience, but he is allowed to use a finer element if he can grasp it. He can show what we ought to see in what is; he can also show what has no existence except in the ideal world within him.

But its regular function is interpretation of the actual world

His regular province, however, is interpretation of the actual world, and he interprets by unfolding his own intelligible version of life. To hold the mind, to compel imaginative belief, this version has not only to be consistent with itself, to the very last inch; it also has to be recognisable in all its parts as a true likeness of what we know. We can realise the most daring and outlandish creations of poetry when, through the incantations of verse, we have struck the poetic attitude of mind. Hence we freely enjoy the poetry of nations utterly alien in habits, environment, and modes of thought; but we do not readily enjoy their prose fiction. The one ignites our imaginative ardour; the other has to pass the cogent test of subconscious experience, and if the experience of the story-teller is not in approximate agreement with ours he will speak a language that we do not understand. The finest translation is, after all, only a half-way house: contrary to usual assumptions, that truth often applies more forcibly to prose narrative than to poetry.[1] Though fiction may, and so often does, reach the higher plane and become poetic, its range and the flexibility of its style being well-nigh unlimited, yet the basis must always be the study of reality; and so long as the warp into which the novelist weaves his creations is the prose texture of common experience, and not the glory-shot fabric of inspired vision, our subconscious sense of realities is continually invoked to confirm or deny the truth of his analysis. Inevitably we criticise a realistic novel much as we would a polemical treatise. The reader's mind is keenly alive to any distortion of the facts of life, any illicit or unconscious loading of the scales. Glaring coincidences and other improbabilities have the same effect as a piece of sophistical pleading. Since the novelist has chosen to put his rendering of life into prose, into a medium that promises exactness, he has marked out for himself a sober track from which he will depart at his peril.

[1] A Hindu or Japanese poem in English is as a rule more satisfactory than a novel equally well translated from the same language. The works of Rabindra Nath Tagore may illustrate the point.

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Prose fiction arises in times of literary decadence: the novel flourishes in times of intellectual and critical activity

Although story-telling may be the oldest of intellectual amusements, what seems at first sight, in comparison with epic or drama, the easiest and least elaborate form of it is actually the latest literary way of presenting a complex of human experience. It is a literary form, moreover, that seems to be peculiarly congenial to a sophisticated, self-conscious, critical society. To go further and say specially congenial to a decadent society would be to beg various questions. Nevertheless, it is a significant fact that the kinds of fiction which were the forerunners, if not the prototypes, of the modern novel were generally the offspring of literary decadence. The Greek and Latin prose romances were composed long after the creative period of classic art had ended; they were made up, indeed, to a large extent of debris from the great epics and dramas. In like manner the mediæval prose romances rose out of the disintegration of romantic poetry, and were manufactured for the entertainment of readers who, like the majority to-day, had no pleasure in the imaginative effort required by poetry. Later, again, the Elizabethan novel, though not without anticipations of certain elements in modern fiction, was obviously a second-hand and second-rate thing, markedly inferior to contemporary verse and showing little promise of strong and independent growth.

But periods of literary decadence are in other words merely periods when poetry is not at its best. The novel flourishes when a wave of imaginative creativeness has spent its force. This is in one sense a time of decadence. Yet it is usually a time when the intellect and the reason are most active; the imaginative faculties may be dormant, but the critical are very much awake. Poetic activity had done all the constructive work in the romances when, at the close of the Middle Ages and the eve of the intellectual awakening, these were put into prose, not without internal changes due to a more realistic and reflective attitude of mind. There were poor novels in the time of Shakespeare, excellent ones in the time of Pope and Dr Johnson. The best fiction contemporary with Wordsworth and Keats was a product of the age of reason rather than the age of romanticism; Miss Edgeworth, Miss Austen, and even Scott, so far as he is great and sound, belong to the school of Fielding, as also does Thackeray, in whom the eighteenth century expired. The romantic novelists, the Brontës and Dickens,

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do not appear till romantic poetry is in its grave, and their work is the beginning of a movement which was to bring the novel at times as close to poetry as the mediæval prose romances had been to the romantic poetry that begot them.

How prose fiction originates

Poetry, in general, begins in some form of lyric, or in the dramatic recital of myth, legend, or traditional history. The earliest kind of prose fiction is a more pedestrian narration of imaginary history or of supposed or pretended fact. The makers of epic are not liable to the challenging question, Is what you say true? It is not felt to be a relevant question. But, sooner or later, when the same tales are told in prose, that question begins to loom, even if it be not actually propounded; and, consciously or unconsciously, the story-teller prepares himself with corroborative evidence. Before long, if not at once, romance essays to clothe itself in the more prosaic garb of matter-of-fact history. Homer and the cyclic poets give place to Euhemerus and then to Dictys and Dares; the *chansons de geste* and the *romans d'aventure* to the life of *Charles the Grete* and the *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*. This is one of the roads by which fiction in prose first arrives, but it is not the only one. Historically, it originates in one of the following ways: as a substitute for epic or narrative poetry; in tales made up to convey moral or philosophical truth; in amusing anecdotes of real life, true to fact, partly true, or wholly invented; in fanciful history, biography or descriptions of unknown lands; or, finally, through thefts of material from foreign literature which has somehow got ahead in development. The history of Greek romance, the oldest we know much about, illustrates all these different processes of origin, foreign influences coming into play in the form of Oriental legend and fable, not only in the professed romancers, but also in the earlier historians and geographers. The Greeks, however, invented prose fiction for themselves, whereas the oldest prose stories in English were derived from Greek sources, and all through its later history the development of English fiction was strongly affected by the existence of foreign exemplars.

Foreign influences compared with spontaneous tendencies

It is necessary, therefore, to glance at these pre-existing works before we begin our survey of English fiction. At the same time we shall have to recognise a spontaneous tendency in English narrative poetry to break down and give rise to prose romance, in

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primitive history and other accounts of alleged fact to become pure fiction, and for all sorts of pointed stories to be invented or reported for the sake of their aptness in inculcating wisdom or promoting morality. The *Morte Darthur* had a poetic ancestry; but Geoffrey of Monmouth, who had started the legend more than three centuries before on its world-wide course, pretended to be writing history. From time to time legendary sagas, metrical romances, even ballad histories, were turned into prose narratives, many of which were palmed off among the uncritical as authentic histories; and there were other examples in abundance of pseudo-history, pseudo-biography, and pseudo-sociology—for instance, the Tudor rogue-books and pamphleteering accounts of low life and social abuses—all of which helped materially in the development of realistic fiction. For Defoe, with his fraudulent documents, and the producers of scandalous diaries and secret histories, common in his time, had had all sorts of predecessors. Some of these were as accurate as honesty biased by ulterior motives can be; the majority mingled fact and fiction in very doubtful proportions. There was the romance derived from sham history, and there was the sham history derived from romance. Stories, moreover, were always being invented or borrowed or stolen for didactic purposes: who shall say how many of these and of the anecdotes in the jest-books originated in actual incidents? Many of the sources of our prose fiction were very disreputable; other sources, such as the storehouses of useful stories for preachers, seem almost too respectable. But, on the whole, in English the origins were much the same as in Greek. However much is owing to foreign influences, it seems as if the native fiction of every country must go through the same natural course of development. Thus, from the very beginnings down to the Elizabethan and Jacobean romances, English fiction was continually borrowing, directly or indirectly, from ancient Greek romance. But the ultimate effect of these loans may easily be exaggerated. English fiction would have come to maturity without them, and did at length develop on better lines in spite of them. Premising thus, we may now, with due brevity, run through the miscellaneous foreign work that was ready to hand for adaptation into English when our native writers were first struck with the idea of recounting a story in prose.

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Ancient Greek romance is very far from consisting only of the novels or romances of the so-called erotic writers, Iamblichus, Heliodorus, Achilles Tatius, Longus, and their followers, which were translated into many languages, and became a public quarry for plots and motives and similar materials.[1] These were indeed the first prose stories of any length to be read simply for enjoyment, and not for information, moral improvement, or any other extraneous purpose; the first, also, having intricate plots, revelations, catastrophes, a love affair properly rounded off, and all the devices henceforth to be regarded as the consecrated insignia of popular fiction. But if these were the first regular romances in Greek literature, Greek romance was a much older thing, though it had appeared in manifold disguises, and had often crept surreptitiously into grave historical narratives and other works of high seriousness. *Greek romance*

When the prose compilers, epitomists, and paraphrasts began their deadly operations upon the Homeric and cyclic poems it is impossible to say. Only fragments and allusions in later compendiums remain of their work, which, as it well merited, had no lasting vogue. The earlier logographers assumed the appropriate attitude of the prose writer, treating the imaginative material upon which they stolidly drudged as historical or at any rate semi-historical. Thus Acusilaus (*c.* 500 B.C.) accepted Hesiod's poems as a sound enough basis for genealogy; and Hellanicus (*c.* 440 B.C.) considered the stories in his Homeric originals merely as somewhat exaggerated, and in his contribution to the current Trojan histories reduced the performances of the human heroes to moderate standards of credibility, without however venturing to rationalise the supernatural incidents. He represents the combat of Achilles and the Scamander as the struggle between a powerful swimmer and a raging flood; but he leaves the prodigies worked from Olympus uncurtailed. Chassang gives a catalogue of his fellow-logographers.[2] A number of these primitive and undiscriminating chroniclers receive as much mention as they deserve from Herodotus and Thucydides. They were no doubt accepted in their time as respectable historians, and no doubt thought themselves

[1] See Chassang, *Histoire du Roman dans l'Antiquité* (Paris, 1862), and E. Rohde, *Der griechische Roman und Seine Vorläufer* (Leipzig, 1876, new ed., 1900).

[2] Chassang, *Histoire du Roman*, p. 126.

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such ; but they were merely uncritical compilers, drawing upon fabulous sources, and more intent on making up an exciting narrative than ascertaining truth. At a later date they were used much more freely in his *Bibliotheca Historica* (*c.* 49 B.C.), by Diodorus Siculus, whose intentions were honest enough, but who derived his version of the remoter history of Egypt, Ethiopia, Asia, and Greece from legendary and dubious literary sources. He admits candidly that his choice of a story was constantly determined, not by its credentials, but by its suitability for ethical teaching. His contemporary, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, historian of early Rome, likewise reproduced in all good faith fragments of the spurious Trojan history that had been growing up for centuries.

Euhemerus

It is Diodorus that has given an epitome and preserved the longest literal extracts of the famous *Sacred History* of the rationalist of ancient myth, Euhemerus (fourth century B.C.). Nothing is more significant than that the author of this controversial work put it into the form of a prose romance ; at the same time, as romancers have continued to do when they wish to impose on their readers, bringing forward personal attestations that he was writing down what had actually happened to himself. His isle of Panchæa is a Utopia very like the Fortunate Isle of Iambulus or Plato's Atlantis, which brings his tale within the embrace of philosophical romance. But it is his drastic handling of the ancient myths that gave the book celebrity. He propounds the view that the ancient divinities were kings and princes, and great men whose achievements had been rewarded by divine honours ; and the significant point is that he does not state this theory in the form of an argument, but tells us that the facts had been preserved in the inscriptions on a pillar of gold in Panchæa, which were interpreted to him by the priests of the island.

Origins of the mediæval legends of Troy

Meanwhile a body of fabulous history appears to have been gradually accumulating out of the debris of epic, myth, and tradition which was far more flagrant in its arbitrary distortion of even legendary history. Not much is known, except from indirect evidence, of the romantic histories that gave a more extravagant colouring to the stories told by the Homeric and cyclic poets and by the tragic writers until we come to Philostratus the Lemnian (born *c.* A.D. 200). He was a nephew and son-in-law of Flavius

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Philostratus, the Athenian (A.D. 172 to *c.* 245), who wrote *Lives of the Sophists*, and a series of erotic *Letters*, but who is better known for his biography of the famous mystic, Apollonius of Tyana, a book which is almost certainly a tissue of legend and invention, in spite of its display of circumstantial evidence and alleged authorities.[1]

In the *Heroicus*, Philostratus the Lemnian throws his revised account of the heroes of the Trojan war into a dialogue, and invokes as sponsor to his version of the mythical history the shade of Protesilaus, who had been slighted by Homer, being mentioned in only one passage in the *Iliad*. On the testimony of this prejudiced witness, and on the score of glaring improbability, Philostratus rejects most of the prodigies described in the *Odyssey*; and, though he is not so severe on the *Iliad*, he accuses Homer of distorting and embroidering facts which he was well acquainted with, in that poem also. Philostratus is not without pretensions to rationalism, in spite of the irrational position he takes up in chiding an imaginative writer for being imaginative, a position all the more amusing in that his own corrected history launches out into dreary and more far-fetched extravagances. Philostratus recounts, for example, no doubt on some unknown authority, how the shade of Achilles and the shade of Helen meet after death on an isle in the Euxine, where the foes who had never met in the flesh dwell in love and bliss. This new and anti-Homeric history of the Trojan war is, however, important in the development of romance as illustrating the intermediate stage between the earliest recasts of Homeric story and the unrecognisable versions of Dictys and Dares, which were accepted as the canonical authorities throughout the Middle Ages.

These unparalleled fictions appeared with the usual accompaniments of the birth of prose romance, both internal and external. Homer was a liar; accordingly, heroes of the Trojan war must be raised from the dead to bear witness against him. Dictys the Cretan was declared to have written a contemporary account in the Phœnician language, which had been placed in a leaden casket

[1] *Vie d'Apollonius de Tyane*, par Philostratus, traduction de M. Chassang, and Chassang's *Histoire du Roman*, chap. v. Chassang supposes the author of the *Life of Apollonius* and the author of the *Heroicus* to be the same man.

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and buried in his tomb. The hidden document was brought to light, in the reign of Nero, through an earthquake. It was at once translated into Greek and published, and thence redacted into the Latin version, the extant *Ephemeris Belli Trojani*. But Dictys was much too favourable to the Greeks. Roman sympathy with the other side, which according to legend was the side of their ancestors, had to be gratified by the discovery of a pro-Trojan account. Demand quickly produced the supply, and the famous *Historia de Excidio Trojæ* was given to the world. Both of the Latin forms of these two works are shortened redactions, that of Dares is a very brief and condensed abridgment. The contrast is indeed remarkable between the bald prose originals and the long-winded metrical romances into which they expanded in the hands of the trouveres. The *Heroicus* of Philostratus, it must always be remembered, was itself only a summary of more detailed narratives; and although Dares and Philostratus often say much the same thing, it is more likely that both followed the same authorities than that the former actually copied the latter.

Pseudo-historical romance

We thus see how dull prose, mistaking its province and capacity, had succeeded in extracting from epic only an absurd and valueless history. Let us now see how history gives rise to romance. No stress need be laid on the circumstance that early historians, such as Herodotus, habitually introduced legends and anecdotes which they faithfully report as mere hearsay; or that less honest or more credulous writers both deceived their readers and were themselves deceived, with stories that have literary but not historical value. The fact that Herodotus put fables into his book, without any conscious intention to deceive, merely illustrates what very close relatives romance and history were at their origins. After all, truth and fact never are in exact equation. Herodotus was surely a better historian when he related an apposite and pointed story, even if it came originally from the realm of Eastern fable, than if he had toiled in a hopeless quest for facts capable of verification. We might as well blame Thucydides and innumerable later historians for making their personages deliver speeches which are assuredly not literal transcripts of what was actually said. In the region of human nature, art can interpret where science fails. But the romance of history has a very different genesis; its birth is by no

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means so legitimate, howbeit it shows the proverbial vigour of a stock begotten under the bar sinister. The most amazing instance of this unorthodox virility in ancient times was the rapid growth of the Alexander legend, destined to be one of the most prolific sources of further romance in the Middle Ages.

The legend of Alexander the Great

The legend was born before the hero was in his grave. It may almost be said that he was among the first readers, although we need not see anything more than the raillery of a sceptic in Lucian's story that the conqueror, having had some passages from his *Life* by Aristobulus read to him whilst he was sailing on the Hydaspes, threw the book into the river in disgust at its exaggerations. It is not certain, indeed, that the book was written before Alexander's death. Anyhow it is less intemperate in its fantastic hyperboles than the contemporary record of Onesicritus, who, as Chassang points out,[1] composed his history of Alexander on the same idealistic plan as Xenophon adopted in the *Cyropædia*. Onesicritus began, if he did not complete, his voluminous narrative of Alexander's exploits during the lifetime of his master. But the most popular of these early chroniclers was Clitarchus, son of another romantic historiographer, Dinon. Clitarchus was accepted as a reliable historian by Diodorus Siculus, Trogus Pompeius, and Quintus Curtius, and thus a certain repute was conferred on such episodes as that of the courtesan Thais at Persepolis and of Thalestris, Queen of the Amazons, which became common property to all subsequent purveyors of Alexandrian romance. Only fragments have survived of the still more celebrated biography by Alexander's courtier Callisthenes, who boldly undertook the apotheosis of his imperial majesty, declaring him to be the son of Zeus, on the alleged authority of the priest of Ammon and the Erythræan sibyl. Unfortunately for Callisthenes, Alexander seems to have detected that he flattered with his tongue in his cheek; he is reported to have been thrown into prison and to have perished there.

The Pseudo-Callisthenes

It was not, however, the genuine work of Callisthenes, but a later and an utterly fantastic Alexandriad, as unhistorical as the wildest forms of the Arthurian legend, that gave birth to the mediæval

[1] See Chassang, *Histoire du Roman*, Pt. II., chap. ii., and Pt. III., chap. iv., for a general account of the ancient legend of Alexander.

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romances of Alexander. The compilation known as the Pseudo-Callisthenes must have been put together some time before the fourth century A.D., when it was translated into Latin by Julius Valerius. The Pseudo-Callisthenes soars into the empyrean of fantasy. Alexander is now the offspring of a great magician, the Egyptian King Nectanebo, who had impersonated the god Ammon whilst Philip of Macedon was absent from his wife Olympias. Through a mischance Nectanebo meets with his death at the hands of his natural son, to whom in dying he reveals the secret of his parentage. The stories of the Indian queen Candace and her son Candaulus, of Alexander's war-horse Bucephalus, as miraculous a steed as the Bayard of Renaud de Montauban, the interview with the god Serapis, and a great many other hackneyed tales, are derived from the Pseudo-Callisthenes. Alexander carries his conquests into the West as well as the East. But it is Oriental magic that overthrows the Alexander of history and of idolising biography and establishes in his place a necromantic adventurer, who reaches the borders of China, encounters dragons and anthropophagi, learns the language of the birds, travels in the air in a chariot of glass drawn by griffins, and is the prey or the hero of incessant prodigies and enchantments. Love interest, on the other hand, is at a discount; the Alexander legend developed nothing to compare with the immortal episode of Troilus and Cressida, which attached itself to the apocryphal story of Troy.

The Pseudo-Callisthenes was probably growing up for several centuries and is compounded of the most heterogeneous ingredients. The orbit of Alexander's conquests eventually becomes conterminous with the Roman Empire and the countries known to the Romans. Ancient legends are transformed to suit the circumstances of times far later than that of Alexander. Thus the fabulous Alexander's wars against the barbarous nations descended from the giants Gog and Magog, whose twenty-four kings at his prayer are shut away by the Almighty behind two mountain ranges which come together to form the Caspian Gates, are, at any rate in the late versions, an echo of the time when the tranquillity of the Roman world was threatened by the Goths and Huns. The monarch's character has been entirely changed from that of the impulsive and violent despot portrayed by the early biographers.

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He now figures as a great philanthropic conqueror, with vast ideas of uniting the nations into one harmonious family, and his superhuman virtues are thrown into relief by a corresponding vilification of Darius.

The work is extant in a fair number of manuscripts, all differing from each other considerably, and showing by these differences that they are free versions of the original and were made at different periods. Besides the Latin of Valerius there were a number of translations. One in Armenian dates from the fifth century, and one in Syriac from the sixth. The Syriac version is more faithful than that of Valerius and of the later translation of Leo; it was the source of the Ethiopic version. Valerius wrote in a fulsome and elaborate style that was troublesome to the copyists, most of whom preferred an epitome of his work which was in simpler language. But in the tenth century [1] a new translation appeared, which speedily acquired a still greater popularity than had been enjoyed by the epitome of Valerius and became the standard document for most of the mediæval versions of the legend. This was the work of the Archpresbyter Leo, of Naples, who had been on a diplomatic mission to Constantinople. He called it *Historia Alexandri Magni, Regis Macedoniæ, de Prœliis*, but it is oftener cited simply as *Historia de Prœliis*.

Alexander's letter to Aristotle, and other appendages

The date and origin of certain excrescences on the Alexander story as related in the Pseudo-Callisthenes are obscure. They do not appear in Valerius, though some of the material was used by Leo. The *Epistola Alexandri*, a letter of Alexander to Aristotle, appeared in Latin early in the ninth century; it is a recital of the most far-fetched adventures and impossible experiences. This and a brief essay in mythical geography, more or less accidentally attached to the name of Alexander, the Latin *De Rebus in Oriente Mirabilibus*, were translated into Anglo-Saxon at the beginning of the eleventh century. The five letters of *Alexander and Dindimus*, or Dandamis, king of the Brahmins, of which there is a fragmentary Middle English version (*c.* 1450), are of a moralising tendency, weighing the relative merits of the active and the contemplative life, worldliness and Christian resignation. Here the

[1] A. D. 951-969, according to Dr F. Pfister, in the introduction to his edition of the work (Heidelberg, 1913).

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heavy hand of the ecclesiastic is evident, though the nature-worship ascribed to the Brahmins seems to postulate a different inspiration. Palladius of Galatia, reputed author of a work connected with this, the so-called *Treatise on the Brahmins*, was a bishop of Helenopolis (*c.* A.D. 400) and a friend of St John Chrysostom ; but his book is rather to be placed side by side with the philosophical romances written by Greek sophists. It is said to be based on the lost history of Alexander by Onesicritus, who appears in the story as Alexander's emissary to the Eastern sages. Dindimus, in his personal colloquies with the King of Macedon, preaches his unworldly wisdom with what looks like a polemical reference to monks and priests who had deserted the ascetic path to follow their secular ambitions. More fabulous Oriental lore pervades the story of Alexander's expedition to Paradise, *Alexandri Magni Iter ad Paradisum*, which appeared early in the twelfth century. This provided matter for the wildest extravagances of mediæval romance.

The Pseudo-Callisthenes, with these accretions, was the main source of the romances of Alexander, which rivalled the romances of Troy and of Arthur, in volume if not in popularity, during the Middle Ages. But some scions of the family claimed direct descent from the earlier ancestry. Thus the widely circulated *Alexandreis*, the Latin poem of Gaultier de Châtillon, seems to have been written in protest against the fictions of the popular school and to have had as its chief source the more sober account of Quintus Curtius, which reproduced what had passed current as history since the time of Alexander's first biographers. Gaultier, in turn, was the main authority for the Icelandic prose version of Brandr Jónson, the *Alexanders Saga*. The Latin compilation at St Albans has a similar basis and, like the *Alexandreis*, was a counterblast to the accepted myths. Only a fragment remains of the poetic rendering of the *Historia de Prœliis* made in the latter half of the eleventh century by Albéric de Bésançon ; and a *chanson de geste* of slightly later date is also incomplete, the part which survives dealing with Alexander's youth. The general course of Albéric's romance may, however, be followed pretty nearly in a German poem translated from it a little later by Lamprecht. The great *Roman d'Alixandre*, by Lambert le Tort and Alexandre de Bernay, came out after the

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middle of the twelfth century. It is a vast work, some twenty thousand twelve-syllable lines, the first Alexandrines, and is a contrast both to Gaultier and to Albéric in the freedom with which it accepts all the fabulous stories that were then on the market. It uses both the epitome and the full work of Valerius, the *Epistola Alexandri*, and apparently some parts of the *Historia de Prœliis*, and also Albéric de Besançon and the *chanson* based on his poem. Alexander is now regularly adopted into the family of knightly warriors of mediæval romance; the age of chivalry and of the Crusades has stamped the poem with its own features. This famous romance furnished the bulk of the material used by the Anglo-French poet, Eustace of Kent, in his *Roman de Toute Chevalerie*, and thus, at a second remove, for the finest of our English metrical romances on this subject, *King Alisaunder*, composed in the Kentish dialect late in the thirteenth century. But passages are borrowed here from other poets, from Gaultier, for instance; and the Scots author of the *Alexander Buik*, who translates faithfully from Eustace in his first part, goes elsewhere for the two parts that follow. But there is no need to dwell on these or the later French, English and Scottish developments of Alexandrian romance. Some are more cautious and eclectic than others; but, as a rule, the later they are the more profligate are they in their indiscriminate borrowing. An English prose *Alexander* appeared about 1420; it is in a Northern dialect, and was probably a close translation from a free Latin version of Leo, with interpolations from the alliterative *Wars of Alexander*.[1]

Other pseudo-biographies

The Alexander legend was the biggest thing of its kind in antiquity, the biggest that grew out of the life of an individual; but it is very far from being the only example of pseudo-biography. Biography, in truth, was in much the same case as popular history: it did not begin until the person who was the subject had become legendary. Favourite themes were the early philosophers. The life of a philosopher lent itself readily to didactic purposes, and, as Chassang points out, this kind of biography is closely akin to the philosophical romance. There were many lives of Pythagoras, of which little is known except that they provided a fund of stories

[1] William Hadley, *Thesis on the Life of Alexander in English Prose* (Dec. 1922, unpublished).

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for those compiled by Porphyry and Iamblichus the Neoplatonist. The former of these writers was the more credulous, but they both retailed anecdotes that are palpably absurd, the only valuable part of their works being the account of the Pythagorean philosophy, which, nevertheless, is that of the followers rather than the teaching of the sage himself. Diogenes was another philosopher concerning whom there is little but traditionary stories. Plutarch handles these with tact, but Dion Chrysostom expands and embellishes with all the art of a romanticist.

Apollonius of Tyana

The *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, by Flavius Philostratus, has come down to us entire. Philostratus pretends that his work is based on memoirs left by a certain Damis, who was the disciple and fellow-traveller of the neo-Pythagorean; but it is doubtful if the alleged Boswell ever existed. The same remark applies to other biographers who are cited. Flavius Philostratus belonged to a time, the early second century A.D., given to mysticism, magic, and astrology, and he introduces human and preterhuman monsters, apparitions, miracles, prophecies, and other occult phenomena with a liberal hand. Eastern wonders are imported with the sojourn of Apollonius among the Brahmins, and there are other contacts with the Alexander myth and the work of Palladius. To set forth the revived Pythagorean doctrines was only a secondary object with Philostratus; his first aim was to produce a thrilling narrative, which he passed off on the credulous as the authentic history of a semi-divine person. He also wrote *Lives of the Sophists*, which goes back as far as Protagoras and comes down to his own day. The early part was manifestly compiled from tradition and is worthless, but upon the later orators and teachers of rhetoric the book affords material of interest.

Traditional biography

Most of the fabulous lives of philosophers, poets, and other celebrities, dating either from the Alexandrian or from the Roman period, were less the work of a single honest or dishonest biographer, such as Flavius Philostratus, than the cumulative result of successive biographies by popular writers, who went on filling out the portraits left by their predecessors, in much the same way as the mediæval romancers, later on, amplified traditional stories. Who shall say how many of the personal anecdotes recorded in literature that is genuinely classic were not derived from evidence

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just as flimsy? The difference is that the classic was not subject to further manipulation by later men, so that the greater writers do not become involuntary subscribers to a mass of legendary report. This was the way in which the numerous ancient lives of Homer were constructed, of which half-a-dozen are extant, none written before the Christian era. The one in Ionic, which was attributed to Herodotus, was probably composed in the second century; it contains more baseless romance than all the rest put together. The *Life of Virgil* ascribed to Donatus is an eclectic compilation in which a good deal is obviously imaginary; but the popular legend of Virgil the enchanter is a later growth, more analogous in its course of development to the Alexander legend, except that it originated more in folk-lore and less in books.

Xenophon's "Cyropædia"

Xenophon's *Cyropædia* might have been considered under pseudo-history or pseudo-biography, or it might be classed as a philosophical romance, for it has all the ideality and expository intention of a Utopia. Affecting, like a narrative by Defoe, the manner of unchallengeable history, it selects what it pleases from the current accounts of its hero Cyrus and supplies the facts when they do not exist; it describes how Xenophon would have had his paragon of monarchs act rather than how he seems to have acted. It is a treatise on government and a guide to the education of an ideal king. But do not overlook its purely romantic features. The episodes of battle, peril, and escape are full of breathless interest. More unusual and pertaining to a different scale of values are the interwoven stories of Tigranes and the beautiful Armenian, and of the knightly Abradatas and his wife Panthea, who instigates him to wipe out the suspicion of disloyalty to Cyrus by his conduct in the field, and when he is brought home dead immolates herself upon his body. This is a love story finer in its beautiful simplicity and direct appeal to the heart than anything to be found in the more experienced and more artificial erotic romances of later date. In the cataclysms of fortune through which these lovers pass, cataclysms due to critical events in the history of Cyrus, the author provides something very like a plot; and, again, the chances and changes by which the wronged Gobryas and Gonatas are enabled to avenge themselves on the powerful manage to satisfy poetic justice without any unreasonable straining of probability. At the

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same time, although there appear such remarkable anticipations of romance, the intention is the same all through the book; these characters and deeds and sentiments are of the same ideal order as the general conception of Cyrus and his career. The anticipations of romance may indeed be ascribed to the same Oriental influences as helped later on to evolve the erotic tales. The characters who fall under the sway of such exalted passions are not Greeks, but Persians. Thus Xenophon's piece of fictitious biography is an important incident in the history of the novel.

Fictitious travel and imaginary geography

Fabulous voyages have always played a momentous part in the establishment of prose fiction as a new literary genre. They first appear as attested records of travel in the vast regions known to all mankind; and then merely as the picturesque framework for a Utopia, as in Plato's account of Atlantis in the *Timæus*; for love adventures, as in *The Incredible Things beyond Thule*; or for satire, as in Lucian's *True History*. Mediæval fiction had its Mandeville, not to mention the wondrous adventures by land and sea which provide a similar sort of entertainment in many of the romances. Defoe concocted a small library of travel books, mingled of fact and unabashed invention, before he wrote *Robinson Crusoe*; his later stories, moreover, are largely compounded of imaginary adventures about the globe. Swift, prompted by Cyrano de Bergerac, who was merely frivolous, used the imaginary voyage as a medium for profoundly serious philosophic satire.

The ancients likewise had their Mandevilles and their Defoes, as well as their Swifts and their earnest delineators of various kinds of Utopias; they also had their Dr Cooks and De Rougemonts. But there was no Hakluyt or Purchas to collect and preserve the narratives of early Greek or Phœnician navigators; and all that survives of them and their discoveries, real or apocryphal, is a brief catalogue or a few summaries in Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, or Arrian. There may perhaps never have been such a person as Eudoxus of Cyzicus, whom Strabo puts among the geographical romancers for his remarkable journal of an expedition round Africa to the Indian Ocean, an exploit that may have been nothing more than a fraudulent Greek counterblast to the famous *Periplus* of Hanno the Carthaginian. On the other hand, Strabo is unjust to Ctesias and Megasthenes, who wrote accounts of India, the one

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at the beginning and the other about the end of the fourth century B.C. They seem to have been honest enough, although they fell into the error of taking the allegorical figures carved on monuments for representations of real beings, and so gave currency to the long-lived stories of human and animal monstrosities in the Orient. Similarly, Eratosthenes and Polybius were much too hard on Pytheas of Massilia, who evidently gave a true relation of his voyage to Britain, but was vague and conjectural in reporting what he had heard about the regions beyond.[1]

Lucian's burlesque of the imaginary voyage in his *True History* is sufficient testimony to the vogue of this sort of fiction in the Roman period. He refers by name to only three specimens of fantastic geography : the account of his wanderings which Ulysses gives to Alcinous, the story of the Fortunate Isle by Iambulus, of which there is an epitome in Diodorus, and the description of India by Ctesias. But he definitely states that everything in his book had its counterpart in the grave assertions of poets, philosophers, and historians. "It is the revenge of criticism upon the falsehoods of history," says Chassang.[2] Antonius Diogenes, author of *The Incredible Things beyond Thule*, which Photius epitomises, was probably later than Lucian. His romance is a combination of the imaginary voyage with the story of erotic adventure, as might be said, indeed, of the romances of Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius. Over mythical seas and lands that were still recognised by the geographers, the writer conducts his hero Dinias to the Outer Ocean, by which route he attains the island of Thule, and meets Dercyllis. She has come by still more fantastic ways, through the country of the Cimmerians, where she has a glimpse of the infernal regions, across Spain, a land of many prodigies, and through the midst of the formidable Celts and a nation of Amazons. Dinias roams farther north into a region where it is sometimes night all the year round, and gets close enough to the moon to see what is going on there. A brother of the heroine also has astonishing experiences. For the benefit of the erudite, Antonius Diogenes backs up his narration with spurious evidence, affirming that

[1] For details of the exaggerations or romancing of the early travellers and geographers see Chassang, Pt. II., chap. iv., and Pt. III., chap. vi. Chassang regards Pytheas as an impostor.

[2] *Histoire du Roman*, p. 378.

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Dinias had recorded all these things on tablets of cypress, which were dug up from his tomb during Alexander's siege of Tyre.

Philosophical fictions

The fable, the myth, and the allegory have always been favourite devices of philosophic teaching, whether in the humble shape of the moral apologue or in such elaborate expository forms as Plato's vision of Er the Armenian, in the *Republic*. So telling, yet so legitimate a mode of conveying ideas found approval with the greatest writers, unlike the dubious history or hybrid romance, which was left in the hands of dubious writers, until in the process of change it yielded the germ of a new literature to the creative artist. Among the varieties of prose fiction that first emerged, this didactic variety is the only kind that may be called genuine, the only one that never pretends to be anything else than itself, and for that reason, perhaps, it remained barren and never produced anything new.

It would be superfluous to describe such well-known examples of this delightful art as the Choice of Hercules, preserved by Xenophon from Prodicus, or Cicero's Dream of Scipio, or the most exquisite of all, the story of Cupid and Psyche in Apuleius. Many others are scarcely less familiar. But fables and allegories would hardly of themselves have ever evolved into a more complete kind of fiction. One species of philosophical fiction did, nevertheless, tend to develop in the right direction. This was the didactic myth of an ideal country, the genre now known, after a modern example, as Utopian fiction. It had accidental resemblances to the apocryphal travel book, and this was a temptation to its writers to confuse the boundaries of truth and fiction, instead of relying solely upon imaginative belief. Diodorus, who summarised the *Sacred History* of Euhemerus, accepted it as historical. Plato's imaginary Atlantis was widely believed to be a reality, though only devotees of the occult now hold that Plato built upon a valid tradition.[1] Used to travellers' tales of Cimmerians and Hyperboreans, and wild rumours of the mysterious peoples of the Far East and of Ultima Thule, the Greek theorist was strongly tempted to place his Utopia somewhere in the great unexplored, and declare that he had been there. Thus again we see the easy passage from

[1] W. Scott-Elliot, *The Story of Atlantis* (1896); J. B. Leslie, *Submerged Atlantis Restored* (1911); T. J. Westropp, *Brasil and the Legendary Island of Atlantis* (1912).

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poetic myth to prosaic but spurious history. Hecatæus of Abdera, in the fourth century B.C., chose the fabulous Hyperboreans as the ideal embodiment of his ethical philosophy, placing them in a remote northern island, blessed with an Elysian climate and visited by the gods. Iambulus discovered his Fortunate Isle somewhere beyond Ethiopia, and gave details of its shape and position, as well as a minute account of its perfect social scheme. The Panchæa of Euhemerus, which was a Utopia like Atlantis and the Fortunate Isle, as well as a device for promulgating a rationalist theory of the gods, was described with the same circumstantial realism and Defoe-like attestation. Among the works written as a counterblast to Euhemerism, Plutarch's *Ogygia* adopts the figment of an imaginary isle, like Plato's Atlantis, locating it far in the west under the setting sun, and corroborating his narrative and his defence of the old mythology with the usual apparatus of buried manuscripts accidentally unearthed. Lucian, in absurd myths and wonder stories of his own, solemnly accredited, laughs to scorn both Euhemerus and his opponents. There was, of course, a certain Utopian element in many other didactic fictions that did not adopt the full machinery. It is present, for instance, in some of the Alexander romances, and, again, in the story of the Brahmins by Palladius. One might even discern it in the Arcadian touches so characteristic of the erotic romancers.

Erotic romance

In the ancient examples of fiction or semi-fiction so far considered the interest is of a spacious and public nature, remote from the private affairs of men. The subjects are drawn from mythology, from what passed as history, from the lives of kings, conquerors, poets, prophets, philosophers, and others whom Carlyle would have designated heroes. Then there were accounts of strange and wonderful nations, and pictures of ideal communities and earthly paradises. But as the Greek and the Roman ceased to take an absorbing part in public affairs the sphere of interest was changed. Common life and everyday concerns, the fortunes and misfortunes of private individuals, and more particularly the predicaments and vicissitudes of romantic love, acquired an importance hitherto unacknowledged. In the New Comedy politics and satire of public characters have already ceased to be the central motive, and are displaced by the humours of ordinary life. But drama or any

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other literature was as yet very far from that intimate handling of common human issues which was to characterise the story of personal adventure and the love romance.

The taste for such new motives came, no doubt, from the Near East. Miletus and Ephesus, those luxurious cities of Ionia, were universally credited as the places where the new fashion of literature had its nativity. They were in the borderland where East and West have always been wont to meet, and the new fashion was doubtless in no small part due to the wind from the Orient. The Milesian tales, to which there are so many allusions in classic and later writers, were anecdotes, jests, and spicy stories of a similar light, licentious, and cynical nature to the mediæval *fabliaux*, without the metrical form; though a collection by Aristides of Miletus, mentioned by Ovid as having been turned into Latin by a Roman historian Sisenna, was apparently in verse.[1] Samples of the genre are given in episodes or episodic stories by Petronius and Apuleius; indeed the *Satiricon* of the one and the *Metamorphoses* of the other have, as a whole, more of the libertine and jesting spirit of the Milesian tales than appears in any of the Greek romances, apart from Lucian, who is only a mock romancer. Petronius had genius of a high order. The *Satiricon* is beyond compare the most brilliant piece of prose fiction left by antiquity; there is nothing like its easy and masterly drawing of gross and common or preposterous human nature, and nothing like its caustic wit, before the finest of the modern picaresque novelists. It is one of the apparent anachronisms of literary history. But there is something rather singular also in the fact that the two best novels or romances of the period, and of Milesian extraction, were both in Latin.

Apuleius: the "Metamorphoses," or "The Golden Ass"

Apuleius is not, however, to be ranked with Petronius. He was a man of distinguished talent and skill, who made a synthesis of the entertaining, and especially the more fantastic elements in the popular fictions that were floating about, and converted them into a prolix if not a very coherent story. He had little of the realism or the dry humour of Petronius, and instead of the directness and grace of a classic he wrote in a strained and artificial though not an unpleasing style, very like the poetic prose of Elizabethan novelists.

[1] *Tristia*, ii. 412 and 443.

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The tale of Lucius transformed by Thessalian magic into an ass, and of the bizarre situations that ensued, had been twice treated already, once, according to Photius, by a certain Lucius of Patræ and then by Lucian. Apuleius may have worked upon the story attributed to his hero's namesake ; he merely says that he stitched together various Milesian fables.[1] Perhaps he amplified an earlier tale by adding episodes made out of these. Anyhow, the best of all he tells is the immortal story of Cupid and Psyche, and that is manifestly pure Hellenic. It is as assuredly the fine flower of this age of romanticism as the best of Keats is of the later age.

The adventures of Dinias and Dercyllis, or *The Incredible Things beyond Thule*, by Antonius Diogenes, has been mentioned already. It belongs probably to the first century A.D., but may possibly have been written considerably later. Iamblichus (not the Neoplatonist) probably wrote his *Babylonica*, the love romance of Rhodanes and Sinonis, in the latter half of the second century. He was born at Babylon of Syrian parents, and is praised by Photius, who gives an abstract of the novel, for the excellence of his Greek style and of his plot. But the story of the dangers and escapes of the lovers, who are persecuted by the King of Babylon, in love with the lady, is both monotonous and improbable. In one episode, connected with Berenice, queen of Egypt, there is a curious forecast of the mediæval courts of love, the priestess of Venus sitting in judgment on a case of amorous litigation. The *Ephesiaca* of Xenophon of Ephesus, which appeared in the third or the fourth century, is an equally unlikely story of two Ephesian lovers, Habrocomas and Anthia. These writers are sadly lacking in originality, though they are ingenious in playing the changes on a series of stock incidents. Their historical importance is that they made the chequered fortunes of two lovers the conventional plot for romantic fiction and "established the heroine."[2]

Iamblichus, Xenophon of Ephesus, etc.

Much more readable are the *Daphnis and Chloe* of Longus, and the *Æthiopica, or Theagenes and Chariclea*, of Heliodorus, which appear to be next in succession, though their precise relativity of date is not clear. Longus puts his scene in the isle of Lesbos, and constructs a simple idyll of unsophisticated

Longus : "Daphnis and Chloe"

[1] "Sermone isto Milesio varias fabulas conseram."—*Met.*, i. 1.
[2] Saintsbury, *History of the French Novel*, i. 18.

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passion having much of the outdoor charm of Theocritus and Moschus, though it is not free from Milesian grossness, nor without the paraphernalia of changes at birth, escapes from pirates, and other complications which in such a tale are remarkably superfluous. It is a pagan *Paul and Virginia*, the legendary pastoral of innocent child lovers; and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre signalised the permanence of its motive by taking it as the model for his famous essay in neo-classicism.

Heliodorus: the "Æthiopica"

The *Æthiopica* of Heliodorus is a much more laboured and eclectic performance. The bishop of Tricca, if bishop he were, ventured to outdo Antonius Diogenes and Iamblichus by laying out his romance on the ample lines of a prose epic. He begins in the middle of events, and weaves an intricate cat's-cradle of episodes, not to be unravelled till the very end. Many of these episodes are borrowed from the poets and dramatists, some possibly from the Bible, and adapted by change of costume and circumstance to the time and scene. The time is that of Alexander the Great; the scenes are Greece, Sicily, Egypt, still under a Persian satrap, and Ethiopia. Heliodorus is aware of the value of local colour, he loves to make his backgrounds picturesque, and is lavish of spectacular displays. Chariclea, the heroine, and the only person in the book with a trait of character, is the ward of the priest of Delphi; her Thessalian lover Theagenes claims descent from Achilles. Other suitors, honourable or dishonourable, Phœnician traders, Mediterranean pirates, brigands, soldiers of the satrap, profligate tyrants, and officious friends put every obstacle in their way, till, after vicissitudes that were meant to rival the *Odyssey*, and actually far surpass it in strange coincidence and incessant change of fortune, the lady is recognised as the daughter of the king of Ethiopia and the lovers are united. Oracles, visions, prophecies, and more sensational forms of the supernatural mingle in the events. Heliodorus had more relish for surprise than for verisimilitude. It is a novel of a decadent age, yet the best of its class, and it has well repaid its loans from the classics with the tolls levied upon it by poets and novelists of the Renaissance.

The foregoing characterisation of this celebrated romance might be applied, with certain deductions, to the works of Achilles Tatius, to the so-called Chariton of Aphrodisias, and to Eustatius Makrem-

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bolites, whose *Hysminias and Hysmine* was as late as the twelfth century. *Clitophon and Lycippe*, by the first, probably dates from the fifth century. Chariton, who comes perhaps a little later, made his heroine in *Chæreas and Callirhoe* a daughter of the Syracusan general, Hermocrates, who fought the Athenians at Cynossema. Here, as in Heliodorus, there is a suggestion of historical romance, which the French heroico-sentimental school were to take up and exploit a millennium later. Of the well-known *Apollonius of Tyre*, which appeared in the sixth century and belongs to much the same category as those just enumerated, little need be said now, as it will be considered in some detail with reference to the Anglo-Saxon translation. The other erotic romances might have been treated still more summarily had their direct influence on early English fiction been the sole reason for discussing them, since such influence was nil : it remained for the Renaissance to discover them. But they were contemporary with an extensive popular literature which did have a very profound influence, not only on early English poetry and prose fiction, but also on mediæval European literature in general.

The fictitious element in early Christian literature

The striking resemblances between the profane romances and many of the early Christian narratives written for proselytising purposes or merely to amuse and edify the devout may have been the result either of imitation, intentional or unintentional, or of the time and circumstances in which they were produced. In the Greek and half-Greek world of the Near East, where the Christian religion first spread, erotic fiction and melodramatic adventure competed in the vulgar mind, as they compete among our own half-educated to-day, with cheap mysticism and a rage for the occult. Finer minds were yearning for a new religion to fill the gap left by the obsolete mythology. To these the Gospel came as one among various rival doctrines, Greek mysteries and Oriental cults, the worship of Cybele, or of Isis, or of Mithra. To satisfy these different cravings a heterogeneous mass of apocryphal history and biography and devotional romance came into existence, which was much more popular, and therefore much more influential, than the canonical scriptures. That which was not at variance with the teaching of the Church was fostered and encouraged as a useful means of propaganda ; even inaccurate and erroneous accounts of

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sacred history were not forbidden so long as they were not heretical. But a very large proportion of these questionable writings had no other object than the dissemination of unorthodox beliefs.

This vast apocrypha, part tolerated and part anathematised by the Church, which grew up as a supplement or as a rival to the New Testament and to the authentic lives of fathers, saints, and martyrs, was essentially a product of the same complex romanticism, made up of the vulgar delight in the wonderful and the sensuous and the higher aspiration for spiritual enlightenment, as brought forth the Pseudo-Callisthenes, the lives of Pythagoras, Plotinus, and Apollonius of Tyana, as well as the avowed romances. Even the solemn ethical tone of Christian didactic fiction had its counterpart in the heathen literature of the day, as may be seen from a comparison with such things as the moral tales of Dion Chrysostom. But, whether Christian or pagan, what was written frankly and deliberately as fiction had far less effect upon literary evolution than the fiction which purported to be valid history. In the most popular forms of this religious literature the old confusion, ignorant and unconscious or intentional and fraudulent, between fact and invention is everywhere apparent. Uncritical history, no matter how innocent its motives, inevitably became romance.

The apocryphal "Gospels"

The apocryphal *Gospels* seem to have numbered at least two score: every heresy, every sect had its distinctive Gospel: according to the Hebrews, according to the Nazarenes, the Gospel of the Birth of Mary, and so on. They were written in Greek, but the manner and spirit were Hebrew; their sources were the Old and the New Testament, the statements in which many of them distorted in arbitrary fashion. One that had wide currency in the Middle Ages, which finds its way into the *Blickling Homilies* and into Ælfric, and which appears later in the Christianised legend of the Grail, is the *Gospel of Nicodemus*. It combines two themes, and probably two stories originally distinct: that of the trial, death, and resurrection of Christ, sometimes called the *Acts of Pilate*, and a narrative of the Saviour's descent into hell.[1] Joseph of Arimathea is a prominent figure in the former story; he is thrown into prison by the Jews and miraculously delivered. Here originates the

[1] For a good synopsis of this portion see the late Sir Walter Raleigh's *Milton* (1905), pp. 164-167.

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legend of the Roman soldier Longinus. St John states that he thrust a spear into Jesus' side and blood and water poured from the wound, but leaves him nameless. The name is a scribal blunder, λόγχη, lance, being read into Λογγῖνος. In the mediæval version of the Grail story, which speaks of the Saint Sang, the holy blood, caught by St Joseph of Arimathea in a sacred vessel and conveyed to Britain, this incident becomes the foundation for a notable myth. The Descent into Hell proved still more fascinating to later writers. It is an essay in the style of the Apocalypse and of the sixth *Æneid*, and one of the earliest narratives anticipating Caedmon and Milton. That famous evangelical story, *The Shepherd* of Hermas, which appeared in the third century, also contains a series of apocalyptic visions, intended, like Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, as a heart-shaking call to the spiritual life.

Apocryphal "Acts of the Apostles"

The apocryphal *Acts of the Apostles*, which during the great missionary period were as numerous as the apocryphal *Gospels*, are not only written in Greek, but are Greek also in their more intellectual appeal. At the same time they are imbued with the same sheer romanticism as the contemporary novels. Each writer, says Chassang, "is bent on devising an interesting plot, furnishing surprises, bringing about theatrical changes of fortune, and, by a further concession to human weakness, he is not above seducing the reader by portraying that passion which is aptest to excite emotion, by portraying love. It is as if one were reading Milesian tales arranged for the use of Christians when one reads certain love stories from the *Acts of St John*." [1] According to the Ebionite version of the *Acts*, Paul's conversion is the sequel to a disappointment in love. He is represented as a Gentile, who submits to circumcision in order to win the daughter of the high priest; when she refuses him he denounces circumcision. This was the way in which a sect who clave to the Jewish rite endeavoured to invalidate the authority of their great opponent.

St Paul and St Thecla

The erotic motive in the mind of those who told or retold the story of the protomartyr St Thecla, as it appears in her *Acta* redacted from the *Acta Pauli et Theclæ*, is disguised, but the plot is simply that of a romance transposed. The story may have originated in fact, but in the process of time it was romanticised from

[1] *Histoire du Roman*, p. 263.

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beginning to end. Gained over to Christianity by the preaching of St Paul, whom she hears as she sits at the window of her mother's house, in Iconium, Thecla dismisses her betrothed and declares her resolution to live and die a virgin. Paul is charged with dissuading young women from marriage and thrown into prison, where he is secretly visited by Thecla. The young man to whom she is engaged complains to the governor; even Thecla's mother demands that she shall be burned at the stake. At the moment that the fire is lighted Christ appears in the shape of St Paul; there is a storm, and the fire is extinguished. Paul and Thecla flee to Antioch. There a great personage conceives a passion for Thecla and tries to overcome her scruples; when she proves obdurate he has her thrown to the beasts. But the fiercest brutes fawn upon her and lick her feet. The scene is painted with picturesque details. When she is released, through the influence of a wealthy lady Tryphæna, Thecla dons masculine attire and goes off to see St Paul. Afterwards she lives a life of miracle and sanctity and dies venerated by all at a rare old age. It is a legend obviously moulded on the familiar pattern of the current fiction. Heathen persecutors take the place of bandits and corsairs; the brutal tyrant and dissolute gallant are retained; but a different consummation is kept in view from that which Heliodorus or Achilles Tatius would have provided.[1]

Lives of Saints

In truth the erotic romances are not more like each other in essential features than are the innumerable legends of martyrs to virginity, of which a large proportion of the lives of saints, men as well as women, are composed. They swarm during the next few centuries; they were translated into many languages, often with extensive amplifications and additions of local colour; they were the favourite reading of the Dark Ages. It is hardly necessary to offer the reader specimens; everyone knows about them, if a good many have never read them. But a few that appeared in Anglo-Saxon and Middle English will be cited presently. If any mediæval literature was based on ancient kinds, or received its

[1] The legend is thoroughly examined in Sir W. M. Ramsay's *Church in the Roman Empire* (8th edition, 1904, pp. 375-428), where the possible kernel of truth, or at any rate the original story, of the first century, is disengaged. The suggestion that the lion that had previously licked the saint's feet recognised her by the smell, and so refused to devour her, is rather amusing.

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stimulus from ancient motives, the saint's life, in its most popular form, was assuredly the offspring of Greek pseudo-biography and Ionian romanticism.

The erotic motive appears in two forms, the one apparently the contradiction, but in reality the natural counterpart, of the other : sexual love, frank and unashamed, or sublimated and transfigured, and the cult of virginity. Neither the love episode nor the apotheosis of virginity make much show in the apocryphal scriptures or in Christian legend until Ionian worldliness and sophistication begin to predominate. In the Old Testament, where Oriental usages and social institutions are not condemned root and branch, there is no insistence on the sacredness of virginity, or even on the value of chastity, except as a precaution against adultery. In the Gospels a liberal view of the question is admitted, and divers incidents of genial tolerance towards the erring proved stumbling-blocks that had to be explained away by strait-laced expositors. In brief, Christianity, as it was originally taught, gave no countenance to the extreme ascetic ideal of purity dear to martyrolatry. Nor had this been an ideal cherished by classic poets and philosophers, although absolute chastity had occasionally figured as a lofty act of renunciation or in some embodiment of superhuman virtue. The chief precedents were the virgin priestesses of Ishtar and of Vesta.

The cult arose in voluptuous Ionia, in the land and at the period that produced the Milesian tales and the erotic romances. It was the obvious form of counter-appeal to minds still under the sway of sensual desires unrestrainedly indulged. Asceticism likewise appears in two different forms : the utterly spiritual, which disregards the flesh, and the repressive, which grasps at total abstinence as the only safeguard against temptation. Neither is a healthy or normal rule of life ; the latter is a sign of sickness and degeneracy. Religious literature had to compete with the effeminate erotic literature, and it had to make its appeal in terms that were intelligible and effective. Accordingly it provided the same popular attractions as the rival literature offered ; but its own peculiar message was presented in the form of the most violent contrast, a direct negation of the easy morals of the average man. A reasonable and balanced ideal, such as could be realised by those having

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refined tastes and powers of self-control, would not have struck home. So, along with the pagan eroticism, Christian literature and legend displayed the converse: examples of uncompromising puritanism and other-worldliness. Yet this remained, for the most part, an affair of the outer rather than the inner life. The crude doctrine of physical virginity is suited to materialist and sensual minds that are more absorbed in carnal facts than in the things of the spirit. Hence most of the time-honoured stories of male and female saints who preserve their virtue undefiled, in spite of the most provocative attacks, are repellent to healthy tastes, and are obviously the fruit of an unchaste imagination. May we not, then, forgive the contemptuous irony in one of Gibbon's most abused animadversions, which strikes at the scandal of these inventions?[1]

The Clementine stories

Romance, with few of the grosser accompaniments that disfigure hagiography, appears also in such semi-biographical narratives as the *Homilies* and the *Recognitions* attributed to Clemens Romanus, the first pope of the name of Clement. These are the most interesting portions of a great body of Clementine literature of unknown but no doubt miscellaneous authorship; they are both abridged, for different purposes, from the same Greek original, and they profess to give a first-hand account of Clement's conversion to Christianity and of his association with St Peter. The narrative is addressed to St James, the brother of Christ. All the regular features of fashionable romance are introduced in order to make up a readable story: love business, shipwrecks, captures by pirates, separations and recognitions, and love adventures of both the straightforward and the illicit kind. But the writer or writers succeed far better than Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius had done in picturing the life and manners of the time. The romantic incidents, moreover, are a framework for the inner history of several persons immersed in a stern conflict, not only between the new and the old religions, but also between self-indulgence and conscience, misanthropic despair and faith. Though overburdened with theological discussions, the two books are a remarkable essay

[1] *Decline and Fall*, xvi. The passage concludes: "We should not, indeed, neglect to remark, that the more ancient as well as authentic memorials of the Church are seldom polluted with these extravagant and indecent fictions."

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in the kind of spiritual fiction of which the ultimate masterpiece is Pater's *Marius the Epicurean.*

Religious story in early English literature

Mediæval literature was to a large extent religious literature. That which was imaginative obtained its themes and its characters and incidents less often from the Bible than from the mass of spurious scriptures and of legend and romance which had come into being during the first age of the Church. The Christian *Apocrypha* and the later accretions upon religious history were known in Britain, probably through Latin renderings and redactions. The Caedmonian poems are based chiefly on the Old Testament narrative, but are not unindebted to the apocalyptic visions of later Christian literature. *Judith* is derived from the Jewish *Apocrypha.* Cynewulf and his followers found most of their subjects in the apocryphal *Gospels* and *Acts* and kindred legends. Lives of saints furnished materials for both verse and prose narratives. That the saint's life was one of the main primitive forms of prose fiction in modern European literature, that it was, as has been said, the popular novel of the Middle Ages, has long been noticed.[1] The saint's life helped substantially in the development of fiction, co-operating with other writings that were supposed to be historical. But it should be noticed also that the saint's life was itself largely the adulterous offspring of romance. The beginnings of fiction in modern literatures are connected by continuous threads, thin as vague memories though they be in parts, with the beginnings of romance in the ancient world.[2] The phenomena of surreptitious growth and gradual mutation that characterised the history of ancient fiction will be repeated in the development of the modern novel, and at the same time the existence or the pre-existence of the older fiction will be one of the facts conditioning this development.

[1] Saintsbury's *History of the French Novel*, i. 1.

[2] For a different view of the origin of romance see the late Sir Walter Raleigh's two lectures on *Romance* (Princeton, 1916). Sir Walter considers romance to have arisen, in the Middle Ages, out of the contact of the Northern barbarians with the literature, institutions, and religion of the ancient world. In their simplicity they found even Christianity romantic. As he puts it: "They believed wholly and simply in Christianity, especially the miraculous part of it. To them (as to all whom it has most profoundly influenced) it was not a philosophy, but a history of marvellous events" (p. 24).

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CHAPTER II

ANGLO-SAXON FICTION

No spontaneous prose fiction in Anglo-Saxon

ANGLO-SAXON fiction is rather a postscript to ancient literary history than the true beginning of English fiction. There was no prose fiction of native origin in Old English, the stray scraps of prose romance that are extant being translations from Latin writings, which themselves appear to be derived entirely from narratives in Greek. Even these scraps belong to the eleventh century, and are among the last literary productions in the language of Wessex. Their appearance was as inconsequent as it was unfruitful, but may be regarded as a curious anticipation of that fertilising contact with the genius of the South which was to bring forth later a more vigorous strain.

There is plenty of good narrative in Anglo-Saxon literature, but little of that kind which is story-telling for the sake mainly of a good story. Our forefathers could deliver a piece of life and action in the lofty, epical way, or in the dramatic or the pictorial way; but they had no bent for the plain, intimate story of unheroic adventure, experiences the charm of which is that they might befall anyone, or for the doings of men and women whose personal appeal lies chiefly in their likeness to the undistinguished individual in the crowd. Further, in literature at least, they were a solemn and serious folk, and that English humour which is such a general and vital ingredient in our modern literature does not reveal itself even in embryo till, many generations after the Conquest, a new race of Englishmen issued from the complete marriage in body and spirit between the alien breeds. Anglo-Saxon fiction is poetic fiction, and its elevated tone required the medium of verse. So much was this the congenital diction of narrative that even histories claiming to be matter of fact, such as the biographies of saints, if not put into regular verse, fall as if by an irresistible impulse into a semi-metrical form.

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The indigenous English spirit mainly epical

The native genius was predominantly epical. It looked at history as an affair of glorious deeds and of personages cast in a surpassing heroic mould. The spirit of *Beowulf* and the Finnsburh saga continues unabated in the poems ascribed to Caedmon and in *Judith*. Stories from holy writ or Christian legend are turned into epics and war songs animated by the old national ardour, the passion for liberty, the rage of battle, the splendour of patriotic devotion. *Beowulf*, with the exception of its historical preliminaries, is first-class narrative. The main episodes run straight and clear and with fiery momentum ; the salient figures, the scenes of life, the mysteries and terrors of the wild, are brought powerfully before the imagination ; and the speeches are not only stirring in themselves but also serve effectively to advance the action. But the manner of *Beowulf* and the fragments akin to it is remote from the manner of prose fiction ; the Homeric manner was less remote. And before the centuries brought forth English logographers and epitomisers to reduce the mighty to the scale of prose, such literary mechanics as might have done the job found work elsewhere.

Nor was anything to come for ages yet, to aid the development of the homelier fiction in prose, from that other side of the native imagination which had a closer affinity to romance—the joy in strange adventure, the sense of the poetic interest of deep personal emotion, the brooding vision of the vastness and wildness of the universe and of man's loneliness and melancholy fate. Whilst heroic energy poured itself forth in epic these more passive and introspective moods found utterance in such meditative pieces as *The Wanderer*, *Deor's Complaint*, and *The Ruin*. Here there is an important something, not so much in narrative as in picturing of the mind and soul, which was absent from the great epic strain. There the story was told objectively ; and, as befitted a story of high achievements, the actors are limned in broad, magnanimous traits. Here the poet is subjective and analytical, chanting in elegiac accents the thoughts and feelings of a soul looking out on the world of men or the illimitable vistas of sea and sky. Remote though the environment depicted may be, these touching reveries and laments for the lost or the unattainable come nearer home to us than does anything in *Beowulf*.

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Foreign influences modify the epic

The later narrative poetry, that of Cynewulf and his school, is an application of the old Teutonic art to subjects provided by a more sophisticated literature. It is degenerate in comparison with true epic, and from the historical point of view may be regarded as marking the transition to romance. These poems are essentially different from the earlier narrative poetry, even when the theme is martial enterprise and heroic adventure, in that they are stories of incident rather than of deeds. A dramatic handling of character and motive is essential to epic; but in romance man appears as the sport of circumstance, not master of the event. Cynewulf was no primitive scop, but a cultivated, impressionable man of letters in a gentler age, who borrowed the gist and framework of his stories from Latin writings, which were in large measure Greek in origin, or from Greek legends which he knew through learned monks; and from the same sources absorbed a new spirit. In the beauty and wondrousness of nature he had the same delight as his pagan forebears; but for their grim conception of Wyrd or destiny he substituted the Christian idea of Providence or the will of God. Fortune, chance, the unexpected and incalculable, however much disguised, or unapprehended even by the romancer, had become a principal agent in every story of human vicissitude. In the lives of saints and in the secular romances, when writers who thought of the matter at all tried to put down their sentiments in religious terms, it appeared as a kind of unconscious Manichæism, God's will or Providence now thwarted by, and now victorious over evil chance, the machinations of the devil.

In the Cynewulf poems the celestial forces play a controlling part, and the human drama, picturesque though it be, suffers from the same internal weakness as when events are simply the result of hazard. The *Andreas*, which is one of the finest and may be taken as representative of the group, not only mixes the epic of deeds with the romance of adventure, but is also a mingling of human and divine activities, in which the natural is subordinated to the supernatural. Andrew sails like a viking across the sea, and like a heathen chieftain, rioting in slaughter, delivers Matthew from the Mermedonians. But the decisive battle is fought between angels and demons. Andrew falls into the enemy's hands; he is martyred and left for dead; whereupon Christ descends in person to give

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him the final victory. The wicked are swallowed up; their city is overwhelmed by flood, fire, and earthquake; the faithful are baptized; and Andreas departs, leaving the new church with its bishop sorrowing after him.

Indebtedness to Christian fable

The question which of the poems associated with his name are actually by Cynewulf is not our concern. Whoever they were, the author or authors obtained the bulk of their materials from a floating mass of history, reminiscence, dubious tradition, and forged narrative, with the character of which we have already made acquaintance in the apocryphal *Gospels* and *Acts* and the legends of saints and martyrs. The Guthlac poem, to which was afterwards added a sequel based on a *Vita* by Felix of Croyland, was the traditionary story of a native hermit. *Juliana* is the epic of a Latin saint. Though she is stated in Cynewulf's Latin original, with some parade of historical particulars, to have suffered under Maximian, her story is the hackneyed one of virginity put to outrageous tests. Cynewulf treats it with reticence and refinement, but cannot make it beautiful. The *Andreas* and the *Fates of the Apostles*—whether they be entirely separate poems and from the same or two different pens is irrelevant—are from the apocryphal *Acts*. The *Elene* comes from a Greek legend, possibly through a Latin version; it is the epical story of the finding of the true cross by Helena, mother of Constantine the Great. For the threefold poem *Crist*, celebrating the Saviour's advent, ascension, and second coming, sources have been pointed out in the Roman breviary, St Matthew's gospel, Gregory's ascension homily, and the Latin hymn on the Day of Judgment. The apocalyptic portion seems to bring it into close relation to the *Harrowing of Hell*, a powerful work that recalls, and may have been based upon, the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus*, which was afterwards used by Ælfric in his homilies exhorting to repentance.

Saints' lives

The heroine came into literature, as has been pointed out in the Introduction, through Greek romance; she established and fortified her position through the lives of saints and martyrs. Two authenticated poems of Cynewulf, *Elene* and *Juliana*, it is to be noted, have female saints as their central personages. The saintly heroine is predominant again in the homilies of Ælfric, two centuries later. The saint's life was becoming, or was shortly to

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become, a form of improving entertainment, as it remains to this day among the faithful; but Ælfric employs it for the solemn purpose of leading men's minds away from the pleasures and snares of the world and fixing them on the eternal results of their conduct. The stories that he told had for his simple hearers all the attractions of primitive romance; but they are related, not in the matter-of-fact style of later collections of saints' lives, but with the ecstatic fervour of a revivalist, breathing terror of the wrath to come. His religious enthusiasm finds vent in a thoroughly poetic diction, the rhythmical, alliterative lines of his message almost falling into regular metre:

St Eugenia Saint Eugenia, martyr, was the daughter of a noble Roman thane, Philip, sent by Commodus to Alexandria as chief ruler. She hears of the Gospel, and in order to learn the religion of the Christians goes among them disguised as a boy. After her conversion she is instructed by Bishop Helenus to retain her masculine attire; she enters a monastery, and after three years is elected abbot. The holy woman is much in request for her miraculous powers. A certain wealthy woman whom she relieves of devils falls in love with Eugenia, and when her advances are repelled accuses her of attempted outrage. Eugenia is brought before her own father; the woman's servants swear false oaths, and she is about to be condemned when she reveals herself. She pleads for the accuser's pardon, but Christ sends a "swaegende fyr" that burns up the delinquent and her house. Philip and his family are converted; he gives all his goods to the poor, and is chosen bishop by the Christians. The emperor then sends another governor, and Philip is put to death; after which Eugenia goes to Rome. There among others she converts Basilla, a maiden of royal birth, who suffers martyrdom rather than accept a heathen suitor. Eugenia ere long is condemned to death; but when she is led to the temple of Diana to do worship the building sinks into the earth with all its idols. A stone is hung round her neck and she is thrown into the river, but the stone breaks in two and she sits upon the water; and when she is cast into a burning oven the fire is quenched. For it has been granted to her that her martyrdom shall take place on the day of Christ's nativity, and till then all the torments of her persecutors are turned to derision.[1]

Instead of the carnal love of the heathen romances, these virgins hold themselves immaculate through the most violent

[1] Ælfric's *Lives of the Saints*, ed. W. W. Skeat, i. 24-51.

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assaults upon their chastity, as dedicated brides of Christ, or for everlasting union above with lovers of their own faith, who have likewise kept themselves unspotted. Sacred or profane, romance cannot do without the sex motive. Till the birth of Galahad and after, the more dissolute the state of society and the more brutish the average man's attitude towards woman, the more uncompromising the ideals of abstinence and asceticism preached by the Church and the moralistic writer. Saints Agnes and Agatha are two other virgin martyrs panegyrised by Ælfric:

St Agnes

Agnes, the betrothed of Christ, is dragged naked to the harlots' house, but is met there by the angel of the Lord, who clothes her in a shining tunic, so that the house of harlots becomes a house of prayer and everyone that enters gives glory to God. The son of the Roman prefect comes thither to defile her, but falls prostrate before the maiden, the devil whom he foolishly obeyed thus contriving his death. At this the idolaters accuse her of witchcraft; but she proves her divine mission by praying to the Lord and raising the dead man to life. Still the heathen clamour for her execution. She is thrust into a great fire; but the flames instantly divide, leaving her unscathed, and at her prayer the fire is quenched. After miracles like those that foiled the murderous attempts on St Eugenia, she attains martyrdom by the sword.[1]

St Agatha

Agatha is a Sicilian maiden whom Quintianus, the persecuting governor, tries to seduce. He hands her over to a foul woman, Aphrodisia, and her nine daughters; but they with all their arts fail to corrupt her. She is plied with torture, imprisonment, famine; but the usual miracles supervene. When she is rolled naked into the fire there is an earthquake; the wicked judge is crushed to pieces and Quintianus flees in terror. As he is sailing over a river the persecutor is seized in the ship by a horse, and another horse flings him overboard, so that he is no more seen. Etna blows up with a fearful burning, and the earth is consumed with the flood of lava; but the fire stands still and the city is saved by Agatha's intercession.[2]

In more prosaic, perhaps because more authentic, memoirs of saints and men of pious and inspiring character there are life-like anecdotes and quiet touches of intimate portraiture that come much nearer to the sober and convincing tone of good fiction.

[1] Ælfric's *Lives of the Saints*, ed. W. W. Skeat, i. 171-187.
[2] *Ibid.*, i. 194-209.

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Bede is full of such tender and charming bits of realism. Everyone is familiar with the episode of Caedmon, the herdsman who is bidden to conquer his humility and sing the praise of God with his fellows. Ælfric himself was not incapable of this quieter work, witness his touching account of St Cuthbert's life on the lonely isle of Lindisfarne. But the most popular hagiographies, the compilation of which went on steadily throughout the Middle Ages, and in verity has never ceased, were such as contained situations and incidents parallel to those in the romances. Thus the incest motive, which is the starting-point of *Apollonius of Tyre*, comes out prominently in the well-known story of Holy Dymphna (*c.* A.D. 600), patron saint of Gheel, near Antwerp, which Peter of Cambray preserved in a Latin life at the end of the thirteenth century:

St Dymphna

Dymphna was the child of a pagan king in Ireland and his wife, a woman of peerless beauty. By God's supernal illumination she began to despise princely riot, and, being secretly baptized, dedicated herself to Christ by a vow of perpetual chastity. Her mother dying, her father thought to match her with some neighbouring king, but finding none worthy he was inflamed by the devil with incestuous passion, and began to woo her with flattering promises. Driven to bay, the princess begs a respite of forty days, and asks for her ornaments and jewels, as if to make herself more pleasing to her father. But, while his suspicions are thus allayed, she takes counsel with a priest of famous holiness named Gerebern, and with him and her father's jester and his wife flees by ship to Antwerp. They settle in a sequestered village, and pass their time in holy works and fasting. But the father traces them to Antwerp, and sends messengers out to scour the country, who at last discover the fugitives. For one of them offering coin of his own country, the innkeeper said he had money like it, but did not know the value. Following up the clue, the king is brought by his emissaries to the spot, and renews his incestuous advances, offering her the royal diadem, and promising to exalt her above all the princes of his realm, and to build her a temple of marble, enshrining her image in fine gold, so that she may be adored as a goddess. Gerebern, for admonishing the virgin not to yield, and reproving the king for his villainy, is put to death. But the virgin remains steadfast, committing herself to Christ, her "espoused husband." Mad with disappointment, the king commands her to be beheaded, and when none of his nobles will execute the deed, savagely performs it himself.

The sequel throws light on the processes by which such legends

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took shape in the hands of clerical purveyors of relics with a proper taste for romance. The bodies of Gerebern and Dymphna are cast out to be devoured by birds and beasts, but the inhabitants bury them. Long after, when the spot had become renowned for wonderful cures, the bodies were sought for, and there were dug up two coffins, whiter than snow, made by the hands of angels. At one time the men of Xanten on the Rhine, under pretence of a pilgrimage, carried off the coffins and relics. That containing the virgin Dymphna was rescued, not without further miracles, the raiders getting away with the relics of Gerebern. Afterwards the bishop of Cambray translated Dymphna's body into a tomb of gold, silver, and precious stones, and on the day of her translation was instituted the festival of her martyrdom.[1]

Erotic romance in Anglo-Saxon: "Apollonius of Tyre"

This digression from chronological sequence may perhaps be excused on account of the feature common to this legend and to the famous story of *Apollonius of Tyre*, which was turned into Anglo-Saxon in the eleventh century. This is the only piece extant in Old English that can be called a regular prose romance, and even so it is in fragments, a large part being missing in the middle. The story of Apollonius, which is best known in its main lines from Shakespeare's *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, was originally a late Greek production, and like its kind teemed with thrilling adventures, bizarre situations, and sentimentality in its frankest shapes. A dexterous writer translated it from the Latin rendering into flexible prose, and, as his Latin text is accessible, we can judge how much he heightened the style to suit the romanticism of the new matter:

Apollonius, who is Shakespeare's Pericles, is the Tyrian prince who solves the riddle propounded by Antiochus, king of Antioch, to all his daughter's suitors, and so uncloaks the tyrant's incestuous crime. Fleeing his vengeance, Apollonius takes ship, and is wrecked near the city of Pentapolis in Cyrene, where he is hospitably entertained by the king, Archestrates, in whose daughter he finds his Nausicaa. Hardly are the princess and the castaway hero married, when tidings come that Antiochus is dead and that Apollonius has inherited the kingdom of Tyre. They set sail for Tyre, but in a mighty storm the lady falls into premature labour, gives birth to a daughter, and to all appearance dies. Her body is committed to the waves; but the chest containing it is washed ashore near Ephesus, she is brought back to consciousness, reveals her birth and dignity,

[1] C. Horstmann, *Lives of Women Saints*, pp. 43-49.

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and goes to live with the vestals of Diana. Meanwhile Apollonius leaves his child at Tharsus, whence she is called Tharsia—not Marina, as in Shakespeare's play. He then disappears for fourteen years. Tharsia's guardians prove treacherous. She escapes murder at their hands, only to be carried off by pirates and sold for infamous purposes. The rest of the story consists of the reappearance of Apollonius, whose absence has been spent in Egypt mourning for his wife, his discovery and rescue of Tharsia, and restoration to his long-lost wife.

The Latin writer was not without considerable responsibility for the characteristics of style which led Professor Ker to say that this Old English romance "might have founded an order of euphuistic fiction before the Conquest." This is how Apollonius answers the daughter of King Archestrates when she asks who he is :

"If thou must needs ask after my name, I tell thee, I lost it at sea. If thou wilt know my nobility, know then that I left it at Tharsus." [1]

The impulsive princess falls in love with the shipwrecked paragon, who for his part behaves irreproachably, and, throwing herself at her father's feet, she cries :

"Thou kind father, hear thy daughter's will. I love the shipwrecked man who was betrayed by misfortune ; but lest thou be in doubt of that speech, I desire Apollonius my master [he had been giving her lessons, quite in the style of modern fiction], and if thou wilt not give me to him thou forsakest thy daughter." [2]

The Latin prose description of the unconscious wife of Apollonius, thrown up by the sea to which her husband had consigned her, believing she was dead, reads like a passage from Sidney, Lodge, or Greene. This portion is not preserved in our version, and its rhetoric shows thus the more clearly that the translater did not invent all the graces of his style. One delightful

[1] "Gif ðu for neode axsast æfter minum naman. ic secge þe. ic hine forleas on sæ. gif ðu wilt mine aeðelborennesse witan. wite ðu þ ic hig forlet on tharsum."—*The Anglo-Saxon Version of Apollonius of Tyre*, ed. Benjamin Thorpe, London, 1834. The translations are from the same book.

[2] "Ðu arfæsta fædar. gehyr þinre dohtor willan. ic lufige þone forlidenan man ðe wæs þurh ungelymp beswicen. ac þi læs þe þe tweonige þare spræce. apollonium ic wille minne láreow. and gif þu me him ne silst. þu forlætst ðine dohtor."

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passage recalls the adventures of Odysseus at the court of Phæacia :

Apollonius then went out, and clothed himself, and set a crown upon his head, and took the harp in his hand, and went in, and so stood that the king and all those sitting around thought that he was not Apollonius, but that he was Apollo the god of the heathens. Then there was stillness and silence within the hall, and Apollonius took his harp-nail, and he began with skill to move the harp-strings, and the sound of the harp mingled with pleasant song ; and the king himself and all that were there present cried with a loud voice and praised him.[1]

But the most elevated piece is the description of the storm in which the wife of Apollonius to all appearance died in giving birth to her daughter :

Then was the serenity of the sea changed suddenly between two tides, and a great storm was raised, so that the sea dashed the heavenly stars, and the rolling of the waves raged with the winds, and the fierce south-west wind stood against him, and the ship brake all to pieces in this terrible tempest. The companions of Apollonius all perished, and Apollonius alone came with swimming to Pentapolis, the Cyrenian country, and there went upon the strand. Then he stood naked upon the strand, and beheld the sea, and said : "O thou Neptune of the sea, bereaver of men and deceiver of the innocent ! thou art more cruel than Antiochus the king ; on my account hast thou reserved this cruelty, that I through thee might become poor and needy, and that the cruel king might more easily destroy me. Whither can I now go, for what can I beg, or who will give an unknown the support of life ? "[2]

[1] "Apollonius þa út-eode and hine scridde and sette ænne cyne-helm uppon his heafod and nam þa hearpan on his hand and in-eode. and swa stôd þse cyngc and ealle þa ymbsittendan wéndon þ he nære apollonius ac þ he wære apollones ðara haeðenra god. Ða wærð stilnes and swige geworden innon ðare healle. and apollonius his hearpe-nægl genám. and he þa hearpe-strengas mid cræfte astirian ongan. and þare hearpan sweg mid winsumum sange gemægnde. and se cynge silf and ealle þe þar andwearde wæron micelre stæfne cliopodon and hine heredon."

[2] "þa wearð ðare sæ smiltnesse awænd færinga betwux twam tidum. and wearð micel reownes aweht. swa þ seo sæ cnyste þa heofonlican tungla. and þ geweale þara yða hwaðerode mid windum. þar to-eacan comon east-norðerne windas. and se ángrislica suð-westerna wind him ongean stód. and þ scip eall tobærst on ðissere egeslican reownesse. Apollonius geferan ealle forwurdon to deaðe. and apollonius ana becom mid sunde to pentapolin þam ciriniscinan lande. and þar upeode on ðam strande. Ða stód he nacod on þam strande and beheold þa sæ and cwæð. Eala þu sæ neptune. manna bereafigend and unscæððigra

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A version of the tale of Apollonius was included in the *Gesta Romanorum* and came into our literature again in late English translations of that work. It became associated with the Charlemagne cycle early in the twelfth century and was treated in a *chanson de geste* half-a-century later. Godfrey of Viterbo had it in his *Pantheon* (1186), a Latin verse chronicle from Adam to his own date. Gower took it thence for his *Confessio Amantis*. An English version by Copland was printed by Wynkyn de Worde (1510). Shakespeare obtained the plot of *Pericles* from Gower and, to some extent, from a prose tale, *The Patterne of Painefull Adventures*, translated from the French by Lawrence Twine (1576). More interesting, however, than its many transformations is the fact that one of the Greek romances was introduced into our literature in such a competent manner at this early date. It might have been expected to exert some small influence on native fiction. But this Anglo-Saxon essay in romance proved to be only an incident, not a start, not even a false start; for the horses were stolen and the race was to other steeds.

The Wonders of the East

The romance of Alexander was also not quite unknown to Anglo-Saxon writers. Alexander's *Letter to Aristotle* concerning India, and another of the appendages to the Pseudo-Callisthenes, *De Rebus in Oriente Mirabilibus*, were both translated.[1] The Anglo-Saxon rendering of the latter is a very amusing romance of travel anticipating Mandeville—and the parody of all such literature, Baron Münchhausen.

Let the reader judge by the following specimens of its travellers' tales :—

X. There ants are produced as big as dogs; they have feet like grasshoppers. The ants dig up gold from before night to the fifth hour of the morning. Men who are bold enough to take the gold lead with them camels, both females with their foals and males. They tie up the young ones before crossing the river. The gold they stack up on the females, and they themselves mount them, and they let the males loose. Then the ants discover them, and

beswicend. þu eart waelreowa þonne antiochus se cyngc. for minum þingum þu geheolde þas waelreownesse. ᵹ ic þurh ðe gewurðe wædla and þearfa. and ᵹse wælreowa cyngc me þy eaðe fordón mihte. hwider mæg ic nu faran hwæs mæg ic biddan. oððe hwa gif þam uncuðan lifes fultum." (Cp. *Pericles*, iii. 1.)

[1] See T. O. Cockayne, *Narratiunculæ Anglicæ Conscriptæ*, pp. 1-33 and pp. 33-39, and for the Latin texts, pp. 51-63.

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while the ants are busy with the males the men fare with the females and the gold across the river. They are so quickly over the river that men fancy that they fly.

XIII. Liconia in Gallia is the name of a land. There men are begotten of three colours. Their heads have manes like lions, and they are twenty feet long, and they have mouths as big as a fan. If they see any man in that country, or any man is following them, they withdraw and flee and sweat blood. These are accounted men.

XIX. There is an island in the Red Sea where there is a race of men called Donestre. They have hair like soothsayers reaching from the head to the navel, and the rest of them is like a human body, and they know all human speech. When they see a man of foreign race, then they mention his name and the names of his kinsmen and receive him ; and then after this they devour him all except his head.

XXVII. In that neighbourhood [apparently between Babylon and Armenia] are women with beards that reach their breasts ; and they use horse-hides for clothing. They are accounted mighty huntresses. In place of dogs they train up tigers and leopards.

XXX. This race of men live many years, and they are beneficent men ; and, if any man comes to them, they give him women before they let him go on his way. The Macedonian Alexander when he came to them was astonished at their civilised behaviour, nor would he kill them or do them any harm.[1]

Although the history of the English novel does not begin with Anglo-Saxon, we can at any rate perceive in that literature some qualities of mental habitude and temper that have persisted right to this day and have helped to shape the novel. Two have not yet been particularised. The first is the turn for delivering a story pictorially. *Beowulf*, the Finnsburh fragment, the Caedmonian poems, *Judith*, the poems of Cynewulf and his school, and the splendid fragment on the fight at Maldon and the death of Byrhtnoth are all alike a series of magnificent tableaus. There is far less of definite narration and far more of sensuous evocation of the whole scene, with the personages and the warring hosts in visible

[1] Cott. Tib., Bk. V. I am indebted to Mr J. A. H. Grattan for these translations from the MS.

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motion, than is commonly found in epic, in Homer, for instance, or the *chansons de geste*. This is a distinctive trait of English narrative in both verse and prose, and it is a characteristic of romancers and novelists from Malory to Dickens, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy. The other point is the didactic and moralising propensity. That is apparent everywhere in Anglo-Saxon literature. In the prose works, which are to such a large extent religious or reflective or definitely educational or disciplinary, this is to be expected; but it is present also in poetry, from the gnomic verses and introspective elegies, such as *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*, to the epics of Caedmon and the metrical romances of Cynewulf. This, again, is to be a source of both weakness and strength in the novel, and, according to some critics, one of the marks that stamp it insular.

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CHAPTER III

ORIGINS OF THE ARTHURIAN LEGEND

The three main subjects of romance

THE history of English fiction really begins with the translations, paraphrases, adaptations, and continuations of the French metrical romances put forth from the latter half of the twelfth century to the close of the thirteenth. These romances, as was proclaimed by Jean Bodel in much-quoted lines,[1] fall almost entirely into three groups, the Arthurian or British, the French, and the ancient, comprising chiefly the stories of Troy and of Alexander. In the history of all three the regular stages in the growth of romance are clearly marked: first of all the fact, remote, and more or less inaccessible to inquiry; then the late and imperfect record, followed by the fabulous history, perhaps in the form of a metrical chronicle, in any case gathering more and more folk-lore and myth as it becomes romanticised; next the narrative poem, the full-fledged metrical romance; and finally the prose redaction. In all three the process of growth and change was identical, except for local complications and variations due to the passage from race to race. These variations offer obscure problems; but at any rate the sketch already given of the course of Greek romance, with its assimilation of aboriginal myth, of Oriental fable, and finally of Christian legend and heterogeneous mysticism, will suggest illuminating analogies. It will be most convenient to deal with our material under the three heads indicated, the British cycle being taken first, as by far the most important in its influence upon our literature.

Origin of Arthurian romance—Gildas

Although it is fairly safe to say, in a general way, that the Arthurian story is based on facts, it is by no means an easy thing to state categorically what those facts are. Arthur may be described as an historical personage, yet exactly who he was and what he

[1] "Ne sont que iij matieres à nul home antandant,
De France et de Bretaigne et de Rome la grant."
Chanson de Saisnes, i. 6-7.

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did remains an almost insoluble question; the history consists of vague and contradictory tradition supplemented by pure guess-work. His is one of the few names that emerge from what has been called the two lost centuries of Britain, owing to the dearth of tangible records—the obscure period, that is to say, between the departure of the Romans and the Saxon conquest. On the actual events in which he took part there is only one contemporary document, and it does not contain the name of Arthur. In the *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniæ* of the saintly Gildas, which was written not later than A:D. 547, history is merely incidental to the main purpose, which was to upbraid the British people, and still more their princes, for the failings and iniquities which had brought down upon them the chastisement of the Saxon invasion. Gildas describes them as calling in these foreigners to help repel the Picts and Scots. The Saxons came, but broke faith and tried to establish themselves in the country. War ensued between Saxons and Britons, and the marauders were at length decisively worsted in the battle of Mount Badon. This took place, Gildas observes, in the year of his own birth.

Gildas thus sketches in merest outline the events in which, according to later writers, Arthur was a leading actor: why, then, is there no allusion to Arthur? That question is not quite the poser it seems at first blush. Gildas was writing a jeremiad and denouncing his countrymen for their degeneracy, not extolling their prowess. He also evidently belonged to the Romanising party among the Britons and would thus be doubly averse to praising a native chief. The one leader whom he singles out for commendation was a person of Roman origin, whom he calls Ambrosius Aurelianus, a name Latinised from the Welsh *embreis* or *emrys*, the supreme prince, as Nennius afterwards explains. On the whole his account helps largely to confirm the version given in the next authority, which is the first to mention Arthur.[1]

Nennius

What the seventh and eighth centuries had to say upon these matters is found in the *Historia Britonum* that passes under the

[1] R. H. Fletcher, *The Arthurian Material in the Chronicles*, I. i., pp. 3-8, "Gildas."

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name of Nennius and appeared about 810.[1] This is a shortened redaction of a work that has disappeared, which was itself compiled from earlier documents. In Nennius the history supplied by Gildas is greatly amplified, names and abundant details are added and some entirely new material is introduced. Here at length enters the illustrious Arthur.

Nennius tells the story of the first coming of the Saxons to Kent. At this time, he says, Vortigern ruled in Britain, and was harassed by the incursions of the Picts and Scots, and by fear not only of the Romans but also of Ambrosius, who to the patriotic Nennius cuts a very different figure from that offered by Gildas. Vortigern is weak and dissolute. He makes a pact with the Saxon leaders, Hengist and Horsa, first to give them Thanet and to be hospitable in return for their services against the northern invaders, and then, falling in love with the daughter of Hengist, to grant the kingdom of Kent in exchange for her hand. Vortigern's misdeeds lead to his being condemned by the council of the Britons, and he seeks refuge in the extremities of his realm, where he sets about building a stronghold. In the fantastic episode of the building of this fortress and the interference of the supernatural powers Ambrosius appears in a new and contradictory rôle as a boy born without a human father and gifted with prophetic vision. This is the original of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Merlin. Meanwhile the king's son Vortimer fights with the Saxons, who wax stronger after the death of Vortigern until the advent of Arthur. That person is described as *dux bellorum*, leader in the wars; and twelve battles are enumerated, ending with the great victory on Mount Badon.[2]

Arthur, be it noted, does not figure in Nennius as a British king, but as a brave and successful general, one who made his way to the front by his abilities. The account of his deeds, which in all

[1] L. Duchesne, *Nennius Retractatus* (*Revue Celtique*, xv. 174-197, Paris, 1894), prints text of the oldest, the Chartres MS., and argues that the author of the original *Historia*, written in South Wales, is unknown, and that Nennius, in North Wales, extended it about 810.

[2] *Contemporary Review*, Nov. 1907, "Who was King Arthur?" by J. E. G. de Montmorency, who contends that Arthur was a nephew of Ambrosius Aurelianus, and that *dux bellorum* means a Roman general who headed the British kings. Mr de Montmorency explains the silence of Gildas respecting Arthur in a different way.

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probability was taken straight from the document of 679 used in compiling the *Historia Britonum*, forms the meagre historical basis for all the Arthurian chronicles and romantic stories that were to appear hereafter. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* does not confirm the episode of Vortigern's treachery ; but, though it also fails to mention Arthur, its very silence may be said to corroborate the story of Saxon defeats. Bede drew his information on the subject for the *Ecclesiastical History* from Gildas, supplementing it with details that agree in the main with Nennius and appear to have been derived from Anglo-Saxon tradition. So far, therefore, he confirms Nennius. In the *Mirabilia* of Britain afterwards appended to the *Historia* there occurs an interesting reference to the famous hunting of the Twrch Trwyth, which is one of the primitive Welsh legends in the *Mabinogion*. On the top of a cairn in Buelt (Builth) is a stone bearing the print of a dog's foot. It was made by the hound Cabal, belonging to Arthur the warrior, in the hunting of the boar Troynt. If anyone removes the stone it appears in its place again next day.[1] Among other wonders mentioned is the tomb of Anir, son of Arthur the warrior, slain there by his sire. If you measure the tomb, one day it is six feet long, another day nine, then twelve, then fifteen ; whatever length you make it any day, you will never find it the same again.

Other references before Geoffrey

There are two entries relating to Arthur in the *Annales Cambriæ*, brief jottings made in the latter half of the tenth century, one recounting how at the battle of Badon (A.D. 516) Arthur carried on his shoulders the cross of Christ for three days and nights, the other recording the battle of Camlan (537), in which Arthur and Medraut (Modred) fell. It is curious that the Welsh *ysgwyd* (shoulder) is so like *ysgwydd* (shield), as William of Malmesbury and Geoffrey of Monmouth both describe Arthur as wearing the image of the Virgin on his shield or arms.[2] One MS. of Nennius gives a legend that Arthur was victorious through

[1] "Est aliud mirabile in regione quae dicitur Buelt. Est ibi cumulus lapidum et unus lapis superpositus super congestum cum vestigio canis in eo. Quando venatus est porcum Troynt, impressit Cabal, qui erat canis Arthuri militis, vestigium in lapide et Arthur postea congregavit congestum lapidum sub lapide, in quo erat vestigium canis sui, et vocatur Carn Cabal. Et veniunt homines et tollunt lapidem in manibus suis per spatium diei et noctis et in crastino die invenitur super congestum suum."—*Hist. Brit.*, ed. Mommsen, p. 217.

[2] Fletcher, p. 32.

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a cross which he had brought from Jerusalem and which had been consecrated there.

By this time it is evident Arthur had become a national hero among the Welsh, as is testified further by the *Chronicle of St Michael's Mount*, which speaks of him a little later as King of the Britons.[1] Interesting but less authoritative are the scattered allusions in ancient Welsh poetry. The MSS. are late, ranging from the twelfth to the fourteenth century; but it is obvious that the contents refer to a time long antecedent to Geoffrey, though it is impossible to date them with precision. Several poems in the Black Book of Carmarthen mention Arthur and some of his best-known knights, Bedwyr, Kai, and Gereint. One speaks of the mystery of his grave and the rumour that he would return, and there are glimpses of him as a doughty war leader, as the head of a knightly fellowship, or as the mythic captain of expeditions to "the realm of twilight and darkness."[2] The Welsh sources possibly available at the time of Geoffrey in the form of the stories contained in the *Mabinogion* will be discussed later.

Two English chroniclers who wrote before Geoffrey deal with ancient British history, and, while adding little or nothing to what is to be found in Gildas, Bede, and Nennius, do furnish evidence of the popular renown in which Arthur was now held and of the greater importance attaching to his name than had been ascribed by their three predecessors. William of Malmesbury published his *Gesta Regum Anglorum* in 1125. His chief authority was Bede, but he also drew upon the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Nennius, and, to a certain extent, Gildas. He found these historians inconsistent, and in his rather careless efforts to reconcile them or to make out a plausible narrative he alters the chronology of events. Thus he describes Ambrosius and Arthur as warring against the Saxons during the reign of Vortigern, whom he depicts as a detestable tyrant. One allusion to Arthur's vogue in tradition is very significant. "This is the Arthur concerning whom the idle tales of the Britons rave wildly even to-day—a man certainly worthy to be celebrated, not in the foolish dreams of deceitful fables, but in

[1] Fletcher, p. 34.

[2] *Cambridge History of English Literature*, I., chap. xii., "The Arthurian Legend," by W. Lewis Jones.

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truthful histories; since for a long time he sustained the declining fortunes of his native land and incited the uncrushed courage of the people to war." [1] The other chronicler was Henry of Huntingdon, whose *Historia Anglorum* first appeared probably not later than 1133. As in the case of William's history, there were later recensions, but no changes were made in the text as the result of the fresh material furnished by Geoffrey of Monmouth. Henry adopts the same eclectic method as his greater contemporary, but with less ability; he borrows more freely from his authorities and amplifies more from his own imagination. He differs from William of Malmesbury also in the ordering of the incidents, bringing Arthur in forty years later and calling him *dux militum et regum Britanniæ*, thus accepting him not merely as leader in the battles, but as sovereign among the British kings.[2]

Geoffrey of Monmouth

About 1136, at the beginning of the tempestuous reign of Stephen, a man of Welsh blood, Geoffrey of Monmouth, who seems to have aimed at literary distinction as a means to preferment, published a book which he called *Historia Regum Britanniæ*, designed to fill the gap in British history that Gildas, Bede, and Nennius had left still scantily furnished. He planned his story on generous lines. It reaches back to the supposed eponymous founder of Britain, Brutus, great-grandson of Æneas, and forward to the last of the British kings, Arthur's eighth successor, Cadwallader, under whom the Britons were finally driven into the far corners of their land by the Saxons. The most brilliant chapters are those celebrating the reign of Arthur; the rest, in comparison, may be regarded as a very elaborate prologue and epilogue. It is the first instalment of what eventually grew into a vast body of romantic literature constituting the Matter of Britain. This has now reached the stage of the fabulous chronicle. The facts in which it originated are beyond our power to ascertain, but of their reality there is no question. If it were eventually proved that Arthur is a myth, all the facts would not be proved mythical. In the sixth century there were the wars with the Saxons, and certain battles and other definite incidents emerge. One or more British leaders attained high distinction, and, in all probability, the foremost was named

[1] Quoted by Fletcher, p. 46.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

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Arthur. In the two centuries after the events, Gildas, the writers now cited collectively as "Nennius," with Bede and the *Annales Cambriæ*, furnished the imperfect record. The legend grew by accretion of myth and popular story. Then Geoffrey arrived and all these diversified materials were utilised to construct the dazzling historical picture for which the world was waiting. Geoffrey's work manifestly holds the same place in the progress of the Matter of Britain as that of the fictitious chronicles of Dares and Dictys in the growth of the legend of Troy, or of the Pseudo-Callisthenes in the development of the Alexander legend. The next stage is that of the romantic poem, which in each case duly followed.

Geoffrey's sources

Geoffrey made no acknowledgment of sources, beyond solemn references to a book lent him by Archdeacon Gualter of Oxford, who, he says, brought it over from Brittany ; this book, he states, provided him with all his matter ; in short, he merely had to translate it, without even improving the style. There may possibly have been a book of some sort, perhaps a collection of legends ; but it is much more probable that Geoffrey was simply following a literary convention, the real debt being to legends not yet gathered into any volume. The point evaded is Geoffrey's reliance upon his own imagination for the greater part of his alleged discoveries. Nennius had compiled the first *Brut*, the first history of Britain from the supposed coming of Brutus. Geoffrey's was the second of the numerous *Bruts* that appeared in the Middle Ages. Nennius, as the most superficial comparison shows, gave the outline, which Geoffrey amplified with a profusion of details into the most impressive narrative that he could command. The very words and phrases of Nennius often reappear, and so do those of Gildas and Bede.[1] It is absurd to suppose that if Geoffrey had been translating from a much earlier work he would have gone out of his way to reproduce the language of these writers. A theory has, indeed, been put forward that the *liber vetustissimus* which Geoffrey claimed as his original actually exists in the *Brut Tysilio*, a Welsh version of the history of the British kings corresponding to his *Historia*.[2] But the *Brut Tysilio*, the printed edition of which (1801) was from a

[1] Fletcher, p. 53 ; sec. 3 of chap. iii. deals with the question thoroughly.

[2] The whole question is minutely and ably examined by Prof. R. W. Chambers in *History*, Jan. 1919, pp. 225-228, and April, pp. 34-45, where the references to Dr Hodgkin's and Prof. Flinders Petrie's contentions will also be found.

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MS. transcribed in 1695, turns out to be merely one of the many recensions of Geoffrey's chronicle, but disguised in this instance as a Welsh transcript of what Geoffrey, so it was pretended, translated from Welsh into Latin. Geoffrey no doubt had access to Welsh legends through his position. Brought up in a Welsh priory, the nephew of a Welsh ecclesiastic, he could hardly fail to be versed in the traditions and folk-tales of the Celtic borderland, even though he spoke no Welsh. That he must have used his opportunities will come out as we proceed.

Summary of the "Historia"

Opening with a brief account of the island of Britain, then "inhabited by none but a few giants," the history briefly relates the adventures of Brutus and his fugitive Trojans, with his ally Corineus, on their way to Britain. They arrive, and the two leaders divide the country between them; Brutus builds New Troy, afterwards Trinovantum, on the Thames, the city later called Caer Lud, whence, he suggests, the modern London. Brief chapters then recount the reigns of Brutus's descendants, after which longer ones tell in picturesque detail the story of Leir and his daughters. The tales of Sabrina, of Bladud, Ferrex and Porrex, Brennius and Belinus, and others afterwards elaborated by poets and dramatists, occur in these early chapters. The middle books are concerned with Cæsar's invasions and the Roman occupation; then come the episodes of the Pictish invasions, the usurpation of Vortigern, and the coming of the Saxons, preliminary to the Arthurian books. Geoffrey follows the main lines laid down by Nennius, but expands the story and makes certain alterations. Thus in the account of Vortigern's tower he calls Ambrosius by the new name of Ambrosius Merlinus, sometimes in brief Merlinus; and he then drops the sedate manner of the historian to deliver the fantastic prophecies of Merlin, in Book VII., a suggestive prelude to the wondrous birth and achievements of Arthur.[1] Aurelius Ambrosius and Uther Pendragon, sons of King Constantine, whose brother is king of Brittany, return from that country where they had taken refuge, destroy Vortigern, and wage war against Hengist. Merlin performs divers supernatural feats, among others bringing from Ireland a stone circle which he sets up at Stonehenge as a memorial to those who had been treacherously murdered by Hengist. Aurelius being poisoned by an emissary of the Saxons, Uther

[1] Probably *The Prophecies of Merlin* was first published separately, and afterwards intercalated here as Book VII. (see H. L. D. Ward, *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of MSS. in the British Museum*, vol. i., 1883, pp. 207 *et seq.*). This would account for the change of tone.

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becomes king of Britain ; and, by the arts of Merlin, he obtains admittance to Igerna, wife of Gorlois, duke of Cornwall, in the same way as Jupiter seduced the wife of Amphitryon, and by her becomes the father of Arthur. Books IX. to XI. give the reign of Arthur. He defeats the Saxons in a series of battles—not the twelve recounted by Nennius—ending with Mount Badon. He also crushes the Picts and Scots, and drives out their Irish allies. He settles the whole kingdom, adds to his government Ireland and Iceland, and exacts tribute from the Orkneys and Gothland ; then enters upon a career of foreign conquest, subduing Norway and Dacia (Denmark), and next sails to Gaul, which is held by the tribune Flollo under the emperor Leo. Nine years are taken up by the conquest of Gaul, after which Arthur holds a solemn assembly of his lords and knights and tributary kings and princes, at the City of Legions, on the Usk, where he is crowned a second time with great pomp. In the midst of the festivities comes a letter from Lucius, procurator of Rome, calling him to account for the invasion of the empire. Arthur holds a council, and it is unanimously resolved to conquer the Romans. The government of Britain is committed to Arthur's nephew Modred, and the host sets sail. On the way to Brittany Arthur slays in single combat the giant of St Michael's Mount, who had carried off a British princess. In the campaign against Lucius there are several great battles, but the struggle ends in a tremendous engagement in which Lucius himself and several of Arthur's chief warriors are killed. Arthur is marching on Rome itself when the news arrives that Modred has usurped the kingdom and adulterously married the queen, Guanhumara. Arthur returns with the forces from Britain, lands at Rutupi, defeats Modred in a desperate battle in which many fall on both sides, and pursues the traitor into Cornwall. There in a sanguinary conflict, in which the flower of both armies are slain, Modred is killed, and Arthur mortally wounded, being carried to the isle of Avalon " to be cured of his wounds."

Like a conscientious historian, Geoffrey in his last two books recounts the vicissitudes of the British fortunes under his hero's successor Constantine and the subsequent kings, until Cadwallader, the last of all, flees to Armorica, and the supremacy of the Britons comes to an end. But the preliminary episodes and the sequel are evidently but prefatory and valedictory to the central theme, the epic of Arthur's glory. It is as if Geoffrey had accepted William of Malmesbury's challenge and boldly supplied the truthful history

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desiderated. His sense of rivalry, indeed, is undisguised; he warns off William, and also Henry of Huntingdon and other chroniclers, from the domain to which he alone has right of access, by token of Archdeacon Gualter's book brought out of Brittany. Whether he nursed any idea of providing a British hero in whose deeds Norman and Saxon as well as Welshman could take delight, as has often been suggested,[1] is doubtful; the reign of Stephen was an unpropitious season for such a public-spirited aim.

Geoffrey's method

Geoffrey's pseudo-history gives what may be called the national legend of Arthur, to distinguish it from Arthurian romance, the cycle of miscellaneous stories centring in Arthur which came into literature during the next century, mainly through the activity of Continental writers. It is the first literary presentation of the now legendary facts. How much Geoffrey owed to Nennius and Gildas has been indicated, and the reader may discern for himself without going far wrong how much life and particularity he added, for the sake of vivid narrative, to the bald recital of events upon which he worked. The introductory chapters, for instance, relating the adventures of Brutus and his followers before their arrival in this island, are full of circumstantial touches. He evidently took his material wherever he found it, and used it for all it was worth. Readableness and plausibility were the things he chiefly aimed at. He was withheld by no scruples, such as would hamper a modern historian, from manipulating, for the sake of better effect, either the particulars obtained from earlier authorities or the legends gathered from hearsay. Thus the respective share of popular tradition before Geoffrey and that of Geoffrey himself in altering and combining, and often of confusing and distorting, history, myth, and floating legend is a complicated and perhaps insoluble question. Attentive reading enforces the conviction that he did a great deal of this, and also that he found a great deal already done. Throughout the history of the Arthurian legend there are two elements to reckon with, literary invention or alteration and the unconscious changes to which the stories were inevitably liable in their passage from age to age. How much was due to the one and how much to the other is an interesting problem, but of less importance than the fact that both contributed to the final result.

[1] *E.g.* in *Cambridge History of English Literature*, i. 258.

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His materials

By the time when Geoffrey wrote, the scanty foundations laid by Gildas and Nennius for the history of the Arthurian epoch were already buried under a superstructure of fable. Stories and attributes belonging to other personages had become attached to Arthur and his numerous retinue. Perhaps, as Sir John Rhys contended, the personality and achievements of a mythic being, a Celtic Zeus or sun-god, had been transferred to him bodily. Perhaps, again, Arthur had by popular tradition become credited with deeds and adventures on the pattern of those ascribed to heroes in old Celtic story, for the Celt was always a myth-maker, and appears to have been equally able either to invent an appropriate history having the regular primitive features for a person who had had sound historical existence, or to transpose an account of actual incidents into the terms of ancient mythology. To this faculty such tales as "The Dream of Rhonabwy" and "Kilhwch and Olwen" in the *Mabinogion* bear striking witness.

Howsoever it came about, Arthur had been promoted from the mere successful general to the throne of all the British kingdoms. He was the national champion in a far more imposing sense than he had appeared in Nennius. Britons and Armoricans cherished the belief that he would return one day from the other world to deliver his countrymen from their oppressors. Round him, as round Conchobar in the Irish sagas, were gathered a comitatus of knightly companions, unknown to Nennius, heroes of well-established folk-tales, and nucleus of the future Round Table. With these as his henchmen, Arthur had won fame as a mighty conqueror in Great Britain and Ireland, if not against Continental foes. His fame had spread to other lands and was no mere local tradition of the Welsh. Documents from the first quarter and bas-reliefs from the middle of the twelfth century are known in Italy which show that Arthur, Gawain, Kay, Ider, and other heroes of Welsh saga were already household favourites whose names were given to children and whose exploits were the subject of public works of art.[1] Geoffrey himself has many allusions to stories that he does not relate. He assumed the dignified manner and gait of contemporary historians, such as William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon, as was natural once he had adopted the form of Latin historiography.

[1] Jessie L. Weston, *The Legend of Sir Lancelot*, pp. 4-6.

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From William in particular he seems to have borrowed various local traditions, sometimes altering through misapprehension, and sometimes embellishing on his own account. It was partly from their example and partly perhaps from a desire to please his influential patron, Robert, earl of Gloucester, natural brother to the empress Matilda, that he gave a certain Norman colouring to his picture of Arthur's monarchy. Norman manners and ceremonial, and the ideas and usages of the age of chivalry, tend materially to disguise the mythic origin of many personages and incidents. Thus Kay, one of the earliest heroes in Welsh folk-lore, is represented as Arthur's seneschal and Bedwyr as his steward ; and in the apportionment of conquered France the former is awarded the province of Anjou and the latter Neustria or Normandy.

But the Celtic and mythic nature of a large part of his material is unmistakable, in spite of all transformations. Not only the names of the principal figures, but also those of less important personages, such as stand in the list of tributary kings, have been traced in Welsh records.[1] From Welsh tradition, again, he obtained the legend of St Dubricius, whom he describes as primate of Britain and legate of the apostolic see, of St Samson, archbishop of Dole, and of St David. The legends of Gawain, Yvain, Ider son of Nudd, and others that were afterwards worked up into episodic or full-length romances, were older than Geoffrey's chronicle, which enumerates the names, in Latinised forms, but is not concerned with the exploits ascribed to them. None of these personages is mentioned by Nennius or Bede. Geoffrey's, also, is the first literary mention of Bladud, of Guiderius and Arviragus, of Leir and his daughters, and of Uther Pendragon, all of which legends can be traced with fair certainty to local tradition or myth.

Arthur himself, whether in origin a mere man or, as Rhys maintained, a combination of national hero with "a more colossal figure . . . rescued from the wreck of the Celtic pantheon," is represented by Geoffrey in the regular mythic way, as the offspring of an unlawful union consummated by magic ; and in his after-history are discoverable fragments of mythic lore changed almost beyond recognition. The huge fiction of his conquests abroad probably originated in ancient sagas of a hero's exploits in bringing

[1] Fletcher, pp. 75-76, also 78-80.

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home to his people some coveted prize from another realm, the other world of primitive myth. In "The Spoils of Annwynn" of Taliesin it is the cauldron of the king of Hades that Arthur wins; in "Kilhwch and Olwen" his expedition is to Ireland, which is imagined as a land of darkness and mystery. And sure enough, in Geoffrey, Ireland is the first foreign country subdued by Arthur.[1] In the Welsh legend of his march into Scotland Arthur makes Arawn king of that country—Arawn, who in Welsh myth is monarch of Hades. Likewise of great antiquity is the tale of the fight with the Spanish giant of St Michael's Mount; but whether Geoffrey was the first to credit Arthur with the exploit and make Kay and Bedivere merely his comrades is uncertain. After this combat Arthur recalls an earlier encounter, that with the giant Ritho, another being of primitive tradition. All these are wrecks and strays from the vanished sagas in which he was the great slayer of monsters and defender of his people from plague and misfortune.

Merlin the enchanter

One of the most effective figures in Geoffrey's scheme is that of Merlin, whose name he alters from Ambrosius to Ambrosius Merlinus and then to Merlinus. He had appeared in Nennius under the name of Ambrosius, or in the British tongue Embreis Guletic,[2] as the supernatural boy who revealed the secret of the dragons that prevented the erection of Vortigern's tower, and from the identity of name was confounded with the Romanising leader whom Gildas called Ambrosius Aurelianus. Traditionally Merlin is almost a duplicate of the bard and soothsayer Taliesin, who is usually placed in the sixth century A.D., although Wace, two decades after Geoffrey, speaks of him as prophesying the birth of Christ. There is a remarkable divergence between the portraits of Merlin in the *Historia* and in the Latin poem, *Vita Merlini* (1148),[3] which is often attributed to Geoffrey. This latter account answers much more closely to old Welsh tradition. In the *Historia* Geoffrey depicts him not only as bard and prophet but also as a mighty magician, and advances his period to the reigns of Uther and Arthur. He appears at a later date in the French poem, *Merlin*, ascribed to

[1] Fletcher, pp. 83-84, and Rhys, pp. 10-11.

[2] *Emrys Wledig* (*guletic* or *gwledig* is Welsh for overlord or supreme prince).

[3] There is no need here to go into the vexed question of the two Merlins, Merlin Ambrosius and Merlin Silvestris or Celidonius, postulated by Giraldus Cambrensis and others; on which see Fletcher, p. 92.

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Robert de Borron, of which only a fragment survives. In this and the prose romance based upon it he is a dark, satanic being, though Geoffrey's Merlin was on the whole a beneficent and patriotic sage, who did more than yeoman's service to Arthur and the Britons. As was his wont, Geoffrey handled the figure provided by tradition as best suited the dramatic requirements of his story. William of Newburgh, in the famous tirade in his *Proœmium* to his history of England (*c.* 1198) against the arch-impostor Geoffrey of Monmouth, gibes very contemptuously at the prophecies of Merlin, which he accuses the author of borrowing from Welsh popular fiction and amplifying with the same unscrupulousness as he did the rest of his arbitrary loans.

Guenevere According to Rhys[1] the name of Arthur's consort stands in poor repute in Welsh folk-lore, signifying a woman of notorious infidelity. In Geoffrey's account Guenevere is abducted by Modred, who is Arthur's nephew. In the romances and in Malory he is Arthur's son, incestuously, though unknowingly, begotten on his half-sister, the wife of King Lot; thus Arthur himself prepares the instrument of tragic retribution. But an older myth gives the queen a very different abductor, the mysterious Melwas, whose name and personality are ultimately transfigured to those of the insolent knight, Sir Mellyagraunce. In the *Vita Gildæ*, said to be written by Caradoc of Llancarvan, about 1160, Melwas is the king of the Summer Country (Somerset), and carries off the queen to Glastonbury, where they are besieged by Arthur. This is very unlike the familiar tale of her abduction by Mellyagraunce or Melwas and rescue by Lancelot, who comes into Arthurian story at a much later stage. Rhys cites divers parallels to the rape of Guenevere by Melwas, and sees in it a myth of the capture of an earthly lady by a prince of the realm of darkness. There are indications that at one stage the legendary ravisher of Guenevere was Kay.

Conclusion Geoffrey says that Arthur, mortally wounded, was taken to Avalon to be cured of his wounds. Without explicitly endorsing the confident opinion of the Welsh and Armoricans that their champion would return and deliver his countrymen from their oppressors, which would have been hardly discreet in Duke Robert's client, he is manifestly acquainted with the belief, which was wide-

[1] *Arthurian Legend*, chap. iii.

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spread throughout the twelfth century, as many scattered evidences show. Avalon itself, though through accidents of etymology it became identified with the island in the marshes, Glastonbury, is originally the Celtic other world, the land of the departed and the ever-young. Hence its significance, primary or derivative, in myth and romance. Several legends that had a chief part in the making of Arthurian romance were unknown to Geoffrey. He knew nothing of the tragic loves of Tristan and Iseult or of Lancelot and Guenevere; he had not heard of the Round Table or of the quest of the Grail; he was ignorant of, or did not mention, certain notable passages in the career of personages who do make a figure in his book. Arthur in the *Historia* is presented in a shape that looks forward and also looks back. He has traits and does deeds that pertain to the world of Celtic myth, yet he has features that are essentially romantic. Geoffrey well illustrates the process by which a few doubtful facts were made the basis for a vast fabric of spurious history, and also that by which far-descended myths, their meanings forgotten or but vaguely apprehended, were changed into something having strangeness and beauty, but also having an enigmatic significance remote from that which gave them birth.[1]

Wace's paraphrase of the "Historia"

Geoffrey had the gratification of instant popularity. His book was circulated far and wide in numerous MSS., and was continued, abridged, paraphrased, and pillaged by a host of scribes. One of these was an Anglo-Norman from the north of England, Geoffrey

[1] No good text of the *Historia Regum Britanniæ* has ever been printed, and of course the translations are of no value for critical purposes. The *editio princeps* was that of Badius Ascensius (1508, 2nd ed. 1517), which gives a poor text, though said to be based on four Parisian MSS. The edition of Commelinus (1587) is only a little better, the edition of Ascensius having been collated with a MS. belonging to Paulus Knibius. The Caxton Society's edition (1844), though the editor, the Rev. J. A. Giles, asserts that it is based on a collation of nine MSS., is simply reproduced from Commelinus. San Marte accepted this text in his Halle edition (1854). Some notes on the subject will be found in Dr Chambers's paper in *History* (1919, pp. 42-43). The English translations, all having the same basis, are by Aaron Thompson (1718), which was reprinted by J. A. Giles in *Six Old English Chronicles* (Bohn's Library, 1848), and Sebastian Evans (1904), ed. Lucy A. Paton (1912). The only available text represents very late MSS., which differ widely from those of the twelfth century, of which there are many awaiting collation. The oldest and best are probably that of Bern, described by Sir F. Madden (*Journ. Archæol. Inst.*, 1858), and the Titus MS. in the British Museum. Later mediæval details and bits of Renaissance learning, on matters of classical geography and the like, have found their way into the text, and tend to convey an erroneous idea of what Geoffrey wrote, and even of what he was acquainted with. An edition of the Bern text, or, still better, one based on a collation of several early MSS., is badly needed.

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Gaimar, who wrote a rhyming chronicle of the Britons (*c.* 1150) as a prelude to his *Estorie des Engles*. All but a scrap of this, which seems to have been a mere translation of the *Historia*, has been lost. In 1155 a Jersey man, Robert Wace (*c.* 1100 to *c.* 1175), canon of Bayeux, finished his *Geste des Bretons* or *Brut d'Angleterre*, which is a very free paraphrase of Geoffrey, in Norman-French octosyllabic couplets—the standard metre of the romances. Geoffrey wrote like a grave chronicler ; Wace was a poet. He inserts innumerable little touches of life and actuality, and manages to impart something of the vividness of feeling experienced by an eye-witness. He does not shrink from supplying the many little incidents of lifelikeness that make all the difference between abstract narration and dramatic presentment. He sometimes expands on a much larger scale ; and he not only repaints the picture in the lines and colours of the age of feudalism, putting Norman castles in the place of British strongholds, barons and knights for warriors and chieftains, and knightly duels for savage slaughter, but he alters the idea of Arthur and his paladins to suit the conceptions of his own age—the age of romance and knight-errantry. Wace obviously knew a great many more stories about Arthur and his times than he found in his authority. He speaks rather contemptuously of the many fables current at that day about Arthur—so many that they make the whole story sound fabulous. But he brings in one new appurtenance of the greatest interest—he is the first story-teller to mention the Round Table :

> Fist Artus la Roonde Table
> Dont Breton dient mainte fable.[1]

He relates briefly how the king caused this to be made in order to put a stop to quarrels for precedence among his knights. It will be seen presently that Layamon has a great deal more to say about it ; in fact he bestows upon this topic the "longest single addition" of all that he contributes to the narrative drawn from Wace. There can be little doubt that both poets were indebted to a well-known Celtic story of high antiquity.[2] In his later poem, the *Roman de Rou*, Wace also speaks of the wondrous forest of Broceliande, in

[1] *Roman de Brut*, ll. 9998-9999.

[2] A. C. L. Brown, *Studies and Notes in Philology, etc.*, vii. 183-205 (Harvard, 1900), and pp. 79-80 below.

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Brittany, where exist the fountain of Baranton celebrated later in *Yvain* and other romances,[1] the tomb of Merlin, and other marvels. He is reported to have gone there himself to see them.[2] Wace makes much more consistent and effective use of Merlin than Geoffrey had done, enduing him with the full romantic atmosphere of gramarye. From British folk-lore, also, he derived hints for the character of Gawain, a figure of old standing in legend who had been rather neglected by his predecessor.

Layamon

Wace's *Brut* was a typical chivalric romance, akin to the younger *chansons de geste* : the *Brut* of Layamon is an English national poem in alliterative verse, inspired with the energy and heroic ardour of old English epic, the spirit of *Beowulf*. Layamon was a priest at Ernley on Severn, who wrote his *Brut* early in the thirteenth century, using, he said, three authorities : Wace's metrical history, Alfred's translation of Bede, and the original Bede. But he does not appear to owe really anything in particular to Bede, either in the Latin original or in the English version. He paraphrases in a straightforward manner from Wace, amplifying freely, and adding an infinitude of new touches from Welsh folk-lore and from his own thoroughly poetic imagination. There are indications that he availed himself of versions of Wace differing from that in the printed edition ; he may have been indebted also to Gaimar's lost chronicle. But he lived close to the Welsh borderland, where Celtic tales were probably rife at his very door ; and thus, by dint of new matter and of his imaginative way of story-telling, he expanded the narrative to twice the length attained by Wace. He does not appear to have had direct recourse to Geoffrey to any extent.

In the long passage commemorating the establishment of the Round Table[3] Layamon is pretty certainly reproducing a rude and barbarous legend from primeval Celtic times, perhaps much older than any association with King Arthur.[4] There is a fierce quarrel among the knights at a great feast held by the king, each clamouring for the highest place ; there are blows and bloodshed. Arthur intervenes, and inflicts an inhuman punishment on the

[1] *Roman de Rou*, ll. 6399-6405.
[2] See below, p. 125.
[3] Layamon's *Brut*, ll. 22736, etc.
[4] On the possible significance of the Round Table, or a magic table, as appanage of a culture hero, see Rhys, pp. 9-10.

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chief offenders; after which a carpenter from beyond the sea makes the king a table at which sixteen hundred men could sit, though it was of such an accommodating nature that Arthur could take it with him wheresoever he journeyed. Both Wace in his condensed account of this incident and Layamon in his long and grimly picturesque episode are evidently retailing a Welsh legend. Dr Brown [1] points out that disputes about precedence, often ending in furious brawls, are not uncommon in old Celtic legend, and compares the incident with the quarrel of Conall and Cet in the Irish story of Mac Datho's pig,[2] and that of Conall and Cuchulinn in *The Feast of Bricriu*.[3]

Smaller indications abound throughout the *Brut* of Layamon's familiarity with Celtic lore, which he employs with greater fullness and understanding and with superior artistic skill to either Wace or Geoffrey. His Merlin is a much more impressive embodiment of supernatural power; Modred and Guenevere, whom he calls Wenhaver, are more tragically portrayed, and Gawain appears in his traditional colours as a staunch and generous warrior. More peculiar to Layamon are the Teutonic conceptions that have slipped into his poem, perhaps unconsciously. He speaks of the elves who dug out the bed of a lake in Scotland, of a smith like Wayland who forged Arthur's burnie, and another who made his spear. There are reminiscences of the Norns and other beings of northern saga. Arthur he depicts as a powerful monarch fighting the battles of his country, rather than in Wace's fashion as a brilliant knight-errant; and, it has been well said, the romantic fraternity of the Round Table are presented in his story less as a fantastic brotherhood than "as the comitatus of a Germanic chieftain." His poem is the most splendid rehearsal of the national legend, but it had little influence on contemporary development of the story. That was the work of French or Anglo-French writers, who made hardly any use of Geoffrey or his followers. In England, however, the fabulous history of the British kings, derived from Geoffrey, with Wace and Layamon's expansions, and usually with modifications of their own, continued to be served up by Latin

[1] See above, p. 78.
[2] Windische's *Irische Texte* (1880), i. 96-106.
[3] Ed. G. Henderson (Irish Texts Society), 1899.

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chroniclers, native minstrels, and Anglo-French rhymers. Fletcher gives a voluminous list of Latin prose chronicles,[1] from the twelfth to the fourteenth century, which include more or less of the so-called history emanating from Geoffrey. Some accepted it with proper caution, a few believed in it, others expressed their scepticism. Late in the thirteenth century Robert of Gloucester wrote a metrical chronicle in the vernacular, specifically addressed to the unlearned among his countrymen. In the Arthurian portion he paraphrased Geoffrey, but inserted a great deal from other sources. It is obvious that he was acquainted with the romances that had by this time appeared in French. A little later Geoffrey's story was paraphrased, with much abbreviation, in Peter Langtoft's metrical chronicle, which he brought down to the year 1307. This, in turn, was paraphrased by Robert Mannyng of Brunne, who used Wace, however, for the earlier part of his work. A more popular book was the French chronicle known as *Brut d'Engleterre*, which was translated into Latin and into English. A large number of manuscripts are extant, especially of the English versions; it was printed by Caxton and there were no less than thirteen editions between 1400 and 1528. This was redacted from Geoffrey and Wace. A much more interesting work appeared in the heroic days of Edward III., in the form of an alliterative poem fulfilled with the old Saxon fighting spirit, retelling the national tale in a fashion that adapted it to the way men fought at Cressy and Winchelsea. From this, the Thornton *Morte Arthure*, Malory took certain important passages for his *Morte Darthur*.

[1] Fletcher, pp. 169-192.

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CHAPTER IV

FROM LEGEND TO ROMANCE

The national legend of Arthur and Arthurian romance

THAT there is an immense difference between the national epic of Arthur and Arthurian romance will become clearer as we proceed. The whole scene and atmosphere are different. We leave the land of Britain, and places whose names, at least, we recognise, for the shadowy realm of Logres, with boundaries as ill-defined as those of Spenser's Fairy Land. From a monarch ruling over a feudal society who leads his barons, knights, and armies on conquests abroad, Arthur becomes merely the most distinguished knight-errant in a great fraternity of knights, some of whom also are kings. He is the central figure in a large number of stories having different heroes and no other unifying bond; but, dramatically, he is not the centre of interest, but of only secondary and formal importance. This alteration is due to the totally different methods and aims of the writers. Geoffrey's narrative was a continuous history, with the brilliant career of Arthur as the main episode. The romances, on the contrary, began as short stories, of an entertaining or moving nature, recounting traditional incidents in the lives of old Celtic heroes. Geoffrey of Monmouth's chronicle had little indeed to do with the growth of this romantic cycle beyond the impetus its publication gave to the interest, already awakened, in Celtic myth and tradition. The national legend reached its fullest development in Layamon's *Brut*. Then the inspiration became exhausted. Although in the revival of native poetry during the fourteenth century the author of the Thornton *Morte Arthure* again took up the theme, he made no advance upon Layamon's poem, but simply adapted his story to the manners and feelings of the time. Malory did, to a certain extent, combine the epical and the romantic legends; but in his *Morte Darthur* the British element has dwindled to a small portion of the whole. With the exception of this small part the material that

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went to form our first great work of prose fiction was not derived from Geoffrey.

The French romances

Arthurian romance was the work of French or Anglo-French poets who found their sources elsewhere. The popular traditions to which Geoffrey and Wace and Layamon had access were in all probability so widespread that Arthurian romance would have come into being in much the same way had they never written a line. The work had perhaps begun as early as the first appearance of Geoffrey's chronicle ; it had certainly made great headway thirty years later, by the time of Wace. That French should rapidly outstrip English in the operation was nothing remarkable. After the Conquest English literature was not, like French, German, and Italian, a creative literature. English was hardly a literary language at all. But French had been moulded to literary uses, and French poets were keenly alive to the enchanting possibilities of the new subjects that had come within their ken. In England, too, all who were ambitious of literary eminence preferred to write in French, not merely because it was the language of the Court and the upper classes and the only way of reaching a wide and superior public, but for the simple reason that it was a language suitable for imaginative work. Thus French literature became the melting-pot in which the Matter of Britain was smelted ; and one of the most important chapters in the history of English fiction is how the ingredients used by English romancers in verse or prose, chief among them the arch-artificer Malory, were first prepared by writers in French.

Sources of the French romances

Any minute inquiry into the origin of the Continental romances of Arthur would plunge us into a more troublous sea of hypothesis and contradiction than even the disputes and uncertainties surrounding the story that had its birth and development on British soil. At an early date there appeared a number of episodic tales called *lais bretons*, written in octosyllabic couplets ; they are represented for us by the charming poems of Marie de France, who said that she had heard them sung by Breton minstrels. The poems of Béroul and Thomas, recounting the love story of Tristan and Iseult, were written before Marie composed her lays, but probably some time after the Breton lays which were her originals. They belong, indeed, to a slightly more advanced stage of literary development ;

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they are biographical poems, giving a connected history of their subjects, not mere incidents in their lives. Contemporaneously with Marie, a greater artist than any of them, Chrétien de Troyes, wrote a series of poems in which the heterogeneous materials drawn from myth and folk-lore are worked up into long stories, each having a unifying dramatic interest; these form the basis of the Arthurian canon. Whence and how did all this material come into the hands of Marie de France, of Béroul and Thomas, and of Chrétien? The question is an exciting one, but, fortunately, it is of minor importance to our present business; accordingly a brief statement of the case will be sufficient here.

Insular or Breton origin

Two opposite theories have been propounded to account for the conveyance of the Celtic stories into France, or to the knowledge of French poets: they may be described as the insular or Welsh theory and the Armorican or Continental. Gaston Paris,[1] champion of the former, believed that the Welsh stories were carried into England and across to the Continent by professional story-tellers, who played pieces of music with a verbal accompaniment—compared by Sir John Rhys to the penillion singing still heard at Eisteddfodau.[2] The minstrels interpreted the meaning to the foreigner and thus the Breton lays came into existence. Some of the minstrels were accomplished story-tellers, famous at every Court. Among them Gaston Paris instances the Bléri or Bréri mentioned in the poem of Thomas, and doubtless to be identified with the Welsh fabulator Bledhericus[3] named as celebrated a little before his time by Giraldus Cambrensis. Such a bard might even have performed a good deal of the constructive work implied in long and complex poems, such as the romances of Chrétien de Troyes, though that writer has hitherto been awarded the sole credit.[4]

[1] *Hist. Litt. de la France*, xxx.; *Manuel de la Litt. au Moyen-Âge*, 1889, and *Poèmes et Légendes du Moyen-Âge*, 1900.

[2] *Arthurian Legend*, xvi., where there is a good summary of the discussion.

[3] See pp. 152 and 161.

[4] Miss J. L. Weston, in *The Legend of Sir Percival* (2 vols., 1906-1908), threshes out the question and brings in much new evidence. She believes that Chrétien, at any rate in the *Percival*, had a pre-existent poem to work upon, which is now lost all but a fragment; and adduces internal evidence illustrating the part played by the Welsh fabulator Bleheris, or Bledhericus, in conveying a knowledge of the Grail legend to the Normans before the middle of the twelfth century, after which the legend became Christianised.

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It is contended, on the other hand, by Zimmer and Förster, who maintain the Armorican theory, that the phrase *matière de Bretagne* does not refer to Great Britain or Wales at all, but to Little Britain or Brittany. They hold that both the material and the authorship of the early romances belong to the Bretons. In Brittany, they assert, the stories took shape, and hence they came into the hands of Chrétien de Troyes, who was the first to work them up into extended narrative. There is no doubt that the Celtic myths and legends had a long life among the Bretons of Armorica, and that such beliefs as that in the second advent of Arthur were held by them with religious tenacity during the twelfth century. Upholders of this theory would make the Bretons responsible for the conversion of the Celtic—and other—legends into the very different form of Arthurian romance and for transmitting them to the Normans, with whom they had the friendliest relations, at a period beginning before the conquest of England.

Whether Welsh story-tellers or Breton minstrels were the main channel, it is not to be supposed that either were the exclusive agency. Doubtless some of the Celtic legends reached the romancers through the intermediate form of Breton lays, and others through the more artless and fugitive medium of oral tradition. Such indignant references as are found right down to Wauchier, Chrétien's continuator, to *conteurs* who gave inaccurate versions of the tales and were repudiated by respectable poets, may well apply to these wandering entertainers. Marie de France appears to have been a Norman lady born in France who lived most of her life in England; Béroul was probably an Anglo-Norman, and Thomas was born in this country. Their connections with England do not, of course, prove that they obtained their subjects direct from Britain; they do illustrate, however, how much in that era French literature belonged to England as well as to France, what an international affair it was, and how hard it is to apportion exactly the share of each country's folk-lore and folk-poetry in the evolution of Arthurian romance.

The "Mabinogion"

Whichever of the rival theories is adopted one important fact remains unshaken: the antiquity of the legendary materials and their ubiquity throughout the Celtic world, wide though the differences might be that had developed in the course of time

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between Welsh and Armorican versions of many stories. On the subject of Welsh origins some light is thrown by certain of the prose tales known to English readers from Lady Charlotte Guest's translation of the *Mabinogion*, although the lateness of the manuscripts containing them detracts from their authority on various crucial points. Nor can the attempts that have been made to corroborate deductions from these stories as to the date and meaning of certain episodes, by collation with the Welsh triads, be accepted over-confidently, since the historicity of the triads themselves is impugned. But the *Mabinogion*, which is a single book only in its modern translated form, and originally but a dozen miscellaneous stories belonging to different periods, has interest in literary history of more than one kind. Apart from what it may be taken to prove as to the more remote sources of romance, it illustrates how Celtic myth was continually being intermingled with pseudo-history, how fresh draughts of myth were taken in by the romancers, so that late versions of a given story may contain more, not less, of primitive folk-lore, disguised though it be by modernisation and modern misunderstanding. It is possible, even, that the myth-making habit of the Celt was such that he could not help dressing up recent or contemporary events in archaic shapes. The stories in the *Mabinogion* are, further, an early example of prose fiction, being related in the saga-like prose that was the characteristic form of Celtic—including Irish—epic. Of no small interest, again, is the fact that here is the first appearance of humour in any of the literature from which our prose fiction took its beginnings. There was no sign of this in Anglo-Saxon ; there is very little to be detected in the romances, though Chrétien often exhibits the *esprit gaulois* ; but in the *Mabinogion* there is humour of more than one sort, particularly the daring, hyperbolical, Rabelaisian comedy that has been a marked trait of the Celtic genius right down to James Stephens in our own day. Does English humour—which as a characteristic of the national mind seems to date from Chaucer —really derive from the Celtic strain ? The humour of Chaucer might be ascribed to a mingling of the French and the English temperament ; but, even so, the original fount might be Celtic. Anyhow, the question must not be debated now, although it inevitably arises.

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With the exception of "Taliesin," which is a late cento of ancient legend, all the twelve stories in the *Mabinogion* were taken from a fourteenth-century manuscript, the Red Book of Hergest; but the first eleven are unquestionably older, some much older; most of them are found separately in manuscripts of the preceding century, and linguistic peculiarities carry the date of the oldest still further back. The oldest of all are the first four tales, called in Welsh the Four Branches of the Mabinogi, to which the title of *Mabinogion* ought properly to have been restricted, together with that strange tale, "Kilhwch and Olwen." These, it is probable, were reduced to writing before the rise and supremacy of Arthurian tradition—that is, towards the end of the eleventh or the beginning of the twelfth century.[1] The stories of Pwyll, Branwen, Manawyddan, and Math, whatever the date of their actual composition, relate to a period long anterior. Llyr, the father of Branwen and Manawyddan, corresponds to Lir, the Irish sea-god, and Manawyddan to his son Manannan. Innumerable family resemblances, indeed, to the Gaelic legends of the Tuatha de Danaan avouch an intimate kinship between this Welsh group and the Irish mythological cycle. Such a relationship could hardly have been the result of recent intercourse, as critics have perceived, for in Welsh legend no traces are found of the famous events recounted in the great hero-sagas of Ulster, which were far more numerous and far more popular in the early Middle Ages when such intercourse would have to be assumed. It has, accordingly, been argued that the Four Branches of the Mabinogi are probably relics of a primitive store of myths belonging to the Aryan forefathers of both Goidel and Brython. The effects of time and of gradual descent through successive generations of rhapsodists account for the differences in names and other features which are visible between the Welsh and the Irish versions of these prehistoric myths. In both the divinity of the chief actors has been forgotten; the gods have become men and their sacred attributes a romantic atmosphere of the supernatural. Further, there has been a great deal of more or less accidental alteration and interchange of attributes between the different personages.

[1] "About the beginning of the reign of Rhys ap Tewdwr, 1073," W. J. Gruffyd (*Encyclopædia Brit.*, 11th ed., "Celts"); see, however, J. Loth, Introduction to *Les Mabinogion*, 1913, pp. 27, 40, 43-44.

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"Pwyll, Prince of Dyved"

The very first legend, that of "Pwyll, Prince of Dyved," is a striking instance of this declension. Here it is told how Pwyll, meeting Arawn, a king from Annwvyn, agrees to exchange with him his kingdom and his personal appearance for a year. From the tale one would gather that Annwvyn is a kingdom in Wales, adjoining the province of Dyved. But Annwvyn is the Celtic Hades and Arawn a visitant from the other world; the magic powers he wields, his pack of hounds, the Dogs of Hades, and other mystical attributes are unequivocal signs of his mythic origin. Folklorists have identified Rhiannon, the bride of Pwyll, with a mythic lady of the dawn or a moon goddess, and Gwawl, his enemy, with a solar hero. However that may be, these four tales are full of those dim vestiges of a remote and time-worn tradition which Matthew Arnold described as the detritus of something far older of which the story-teller does not possess the secret.[1]

Though none of the four stories is in any way connected with Arthur, these ancient prose fictions so manifestly represent an original strain in the genealogy of English romance that it is not an unwarranted digression to glance at their manner and style, so utterly different from anything in Anglo-Saxon. Of the "natural magic" and the grotesque Celtic humour examples will occur when we come to the Arthurian stories in the book. The story of Pwyll opens in this epical way:

> Pwyll prince of Dyved was lord of the seven Cantrevs of Dyved; and once upon a time he was at Narberth his chief palace, and he was minded to go and hunt, and the part of his dominions in which it pleased him to hunt was Glyn Cuch. So he set forth from Narberth that night, and went as far as Llwyn Diarwyd. And that night he tarried there, and early on the morrow he rose and came to Glyn Cuch, when he let loose the dogs in the wood, and sounded the horn, and began the chase. And as he followed the dogs, he lost his companions; and whilst he listened to the hounds, he heard the cry of other hounds, a cry different from his own, and coming in the opposite direction.[2]

Translation cannot disguise the inherent beauty of such a simple, concrete style, such directness of narrative, so free from

[1] *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, 1867.
[2] *Mabinogion*, translated by Lady Charlotte Guest, "Pwyll, Prince of Dyved," p. 1.

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all excrescences of ornament and expatiation. It was capable, when the need arose, of the most vigorous and impressive effects. But it compasses its effects as it were unconsciously. If the simplicity was the simplicity of art, the art had been so well mastered that it was like nature, and no change of voice is apparent when war and heroic action become the theme. The style of the finer romances, including Malory's redaction, has kindred excellences. Consider, again, the childlike realism with which is given that typical scene in the tale of Manawyddan, where the victim of Llwyd's sorcery captures one of the miraculous host of mice that have been devastating the cornfields of Dyved.

In wrath and anger did he rush upon the mice, but he could no more come up with them than if they had been gnats, or birds in the air, except one only, which though it was but sluggish, went so fast that a man on foot could scarce overtake it. And after this one he went, and he caught it and put it in his glove, and tied up the opening of the glove with a string, and kept it with him, and returned to the palace. Then he came to the hall where Kicva was, and he lighted a fire, and hung the glove by the string upon a peg. "What hast thou there, lord?" said Kicva. "A thief," said he, "that I found robbing me." "What kind of thief may it be, lord, that thou couldst put into thy glove?" said she. "Behold, I will tell thee," he answered. Then he showed her how his fields had been wasted and destroyed, and how the mice came to the last of the fields in his sight. "And one of them was less nimble than the rest, and is now in my glove; to-morrow I will hang it, and before heaven, if I had them, I would hang them all." "My lord," said she, "this is marvellous, but yet it would be unseemly for a man of dignity like thee to be hanging such a reptile as this. And if thou doest right, thou wilt not meddle with the creature, but wilt let it go." [1]

Manawyddan is bent on executing the petty thief, with all proper formalities, but at the critical moment a stranger arrives, who reveals himself as Llwyd, and avows that it is he that has cast the spell over the seven Cantrevs of Dyved. The host of mice are his household and the ladies of his Court; the captured mouse is his own wife. In this whimsical style the tale goes on until, Pryderi and Rhiannon being set free, Manawyddan releases the enchanted

[1] *Mabinogion*, 'Manawyddan the Son of Llyr."

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lady, who resumes her own shape beneath the wand of Llwyd, and so this branch of the Mabinogi ends.

Stories of the lost centuries of Britain

The next two stories appended to the original four may have been written in emulation of Geoffrey's imaginative chronicle, their incidents being supposed to have happened in the period after the Roman evacuation of Britain.[1]

"Llud and Llevelys" is a dull story telling how Llud, said to be the eponymous founder of London, freed the land by counter-magic from three supernatural plagues. More imaginative is "Maxen Wledig," in which a Roman emperor dreams of a beautiful lady, and after sending out messengers to search her out finds the reality in Carnarvon. Arthur does not make his entry until we reach the next group, the memorable stories of "Kilhwch and Olwen" and "The Dream of Rhonabwy." These are of extreme importance in the study of the British legend, for they contain direct and indirect allusions to matters recorded by Nennius and Geoffrey of Monmouth, as well as other legendary lore about Arthur and his associates.

"Kilhwch and Olwen"

"Kilhwch and Olwen" is found also in the White Book of Rhydderch, an older repository of several of these tales, which appear there in a more archaic form than in the Red Book of Hergest. This means that it was copied down early in the fourteenth century. But it could hardly have been written later than 1175,[2] and is untouched by the influences that led Geoffrey to paint a Normanised picture of the Arthurian world. Kilhwch, a cousin of Arthur, is told that he will never have a wife until he obtains Olwen, the daughter of Yspaddaden Penkawr; straightway he falls irrevocably in love with the maiden, heedless of the fact that he has never seen her. He rides to Arthur's Court for help in the emprise.

And the youth pricked forth upon a steed with head dappled grey, of four winters old, firm of limb, with shell-formed hoofs, having a bridle of linked gold on his head, and upon him a saddle of costly gold. And in the youth's hand were two spears of silver,

[1] "Le *Songe de Maxen* porte des traces irrécusables de l'influence de Gaufrei." —Loth, p. 30. *Lludd and Llevelys* "est incontestablement postérieure, dans sa redaction, à l'œuvre de Gaufrei de Mommouth."—*Ibid.* p. 29.

[2] A. Nutt, ed. *Mabinogion*, p. 345; *cp.* Loth, Introduction to *Les Mabinogion*, 1913, pp. 33-44.

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sharp, well-tempered, headed with steel, three ells in length, of an edge to wound the wind, and cause blood to flow, and swifter than the fall of the dewdrop from the blade of reed grass upon the earth when the dew of June is at the heaviest. A gold-hilted sword was upon his thigh, the blade of which was of gold, bearing a cross of inlaid gold of the hue of the lightning of heaven : his war-horn was of ivory. . . . And the blade of grass bent not beneath him, so light was his courser's tread as he journeyed towards the gate of Arthur's Palace.

He makes his petition, calling for volunteers upon a host of Arthur's knights by name and lineage. Here is inserted the famous catalogue, headed by Bedivere and Kai, and including a number of names that are not found elsewhere. Many of these heroes have outlandish gifts, apparently drawn from old myth.

Unto these three men belonged these three qualities,—with Henbedestyr there was not any one who could keep pace, either on horseback or on foot ; with Henwas Adeinawg, no four-footed beast could run the distance of an acre, much less could it go beyond it ; and as to Sgilti Yscawndroed, when he intended to go upon a message for his lord, he never sought to find a path, but knowing whither he was to go, if his way lay through a wood he went along the tops of the trees. During his whole life, a blade of reed grass bent not beneath his feet, much less did one ever break, so lightly did he tread. Teithi Hen the son of Gwynhan (his dominions were swallowed up by the sea, and he himself hardly escaped, and he came to Arthur ; and his knife had this peculiarity, that from the time that he came there no haft would ever remain upon it, and owing to this a sickness came over him, and he pined away during the remainder of his life, and of this he died).

Accompanied by an embassy of knights from the king, Kilhwch arrives at length at the castle of the grim Yspaddaden Penkawr, where they are confronted first by the herdsman Custennin, brother of the terrible chieftain, who has oppressed him because of his possessions. Custennin warns them that many have been on this mission, but none ever returned alive. The herdsman's wife runs out with joy when she hears who are approaching, for Kilhwch is her nephew. They have reason to fear the warmth of her affection.

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And Kai snatched a billet out of the pile. And when she met them she sought to throw her arms about their necks. And Kai placed the log between her two hands, and she squeezed it so that it became a twisted coil. "O woman," said Kai, "if thou hadst squeezed me thus, none could ever again have set their affections on me. Evil love were this."

Her niece Olwen comes to the dwelling in response to a message.

The maiden was clothed in a robe of flame-coloured silk, and about her neck was a collar of ruddy gold, on which were precious emeralds and rubies. More yellow was her hair than the flower of the broom, and her skin was whiter than the foam of the wave, and fairer were her hands and her fingers than the blossoms of the wood anemone amidst the spray of the meadow fountain. The eye of the trained hawk, the glance of the three-mewed falcon was not brighter than hers. Her bosom was more snowy than the breast of the white swan, her cheek was redder than the reddest roses. Whoso beheld her was filled with her love. Four white trefoils sprung up wherever she trod. And therefore was she called Olwen.

Her monstrous sire greets them and they make their demand. He answers in a terror-striking speech, concluding: "Raise up the forks beneath my two eyebrows which have fallen over my eyes, that I may see the fashion of my son-in-law." And they did so. "Come hither to-morrow and you shall have an answer." As they depart he hurls a poisoned dart, which Bedivere catches and flings back, piercing him through the knee. "A cursed ungentle son-in-law, truly," he says. "I shall ever walk the worse for his rudeness." Next day they have no better answer. Yspaddaden again flings a poisoned dart, which is thrown back, transfixing his breast. "A cursed ungentle son-in-law, truly," said he; "the hard iron pains me like the bite of a horse-leech. . . . Henceforth, whenever I go up a hill I shall have a scant in my breath, and a pain in my chest, and I shall often loathe my food." A third time he treats them with the same discourtesy, and now the dart goes through his eyeball and out at the back of his head. "A cursed ungentle son-in-law, truly," observes the savage. "As long as I remain alive my eyesight will be the worse. Whenever I go against the wind my eyes will water, and peradventure my head will burn

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and I shall have a giddiness every new moon. Cursed be the fire in which it was forged. Like the bite of a mad dog is the stroke of this poisoned iron."

At last the father yields consent, but upon hard conditions. Before Kilhwch can wed the lady he must perform a series of prodigious tasks, the most formidable of which is to take from the terrible boar, Trwyth, son of Prince Tared, the comb and scissors which are the only implements that will serve for dressing the hair of Yspaddaden.[1]

Now ensues the great episode of the hunting of the Twrch Trwyth. Arthur summons all the warriors in the three islands of Britain, and in the three islands adjacent, and all that were in France and in Armorica, in Normandy, and in the Summer Country, and with these he goes into Ireland, where the boar Trwyth, who had once been a king and had been transformed by God into a swine for his sins, lay with his seven young pigs. The Irish, who were in terror from his ravages, joined Arthur in the hunt. But the boar lays waste the country and crosses into Wales to make reprisals. There he commits fearful havoc before Arthur and his host come up with him. The chase continues over a wide tract and the young pigs one by one are slain, after furious combats in which many knights perish. As Twrch Trwyth holds on his way into Cornwall, Arthur and his champions catch him by the feet and plunge him in the Severn. Here they seize the razor and the scissors; but all that they had encountered was mere play to what they endured in winning the comb. "And then he was hunted from Cornwall and driven straight forward into the deep sea. And thenceforth it was never known whither he went."

Such was the hunting of Twrch Trwyth, and such the manner in which it was related, a manner that may represent the original of romantic narrative prose. What is the meaning of it all? Alfred Nutt called attention to the resemblances between this story and that of Rhonabwy and the Irish romantic sagas[2]; the gasconading rhetoric and hyperbole in the descriptive passages, and the tone

[1] The ordeals in Meredith's *Shaving of Shagpat* are of a like kind, and may have been suggested by Celtic, not Oriental, lore.
[2] Notes to his edition of the *Mabinogion*.

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suggesting burlesque are paralleled in the *Feast of Bricriu*, the *Vision of MacConglinne*, and the *Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel*. Nutt would have it that the two stories were written by men whose imaginations had been stirred by the Irish tales, and who tried their hand at the same literary genre. Rhys laid more stress on the exactness of the topography. The route of the boar and his pursuers can be traced over a large part of the map of Britain. Hence he thought "Kilhwch and Olwen" might be the fragments remaining of a long topographical story, a remarkable feature being the word-play upon place-names.[1]

"The Dream of Rhonabwy"

Difficulties present themselves again in any attempt to construe the next story. "The Dream of Rhonabwy" has an introductory framework, in which appear two historical personages, Madawc and Iorwerth, sons of Mareddud, a chieftain in Powys. One died in 1159, the other about 1165.[2] The story can hardly have been

[1] Article in *Transactions of the Cymmrodorion Society*, 1894-1895. A fuller explanation was ventured by Mr J. H. Moore (see *Athenæum*, 1st Feb. 1913: "The Historical Basis of Tristan and Iseult") which has the merit of furnishing a meaning for many specific details that must otherwise appear arbitrary and inconsequent inventions, although the "basis" must be admitted to be highly conjectural. Briefly, Mr Moore contends that this is a typically Welsh version, or inversion, of an historic episode, a Danish slave-catching expedition from Ireland to the west coast of Britain in the year 835, headed by the viking Ragnar Lodbrok, a raid mentioned under that date in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. (The actual entry is to the effect that the Danes were joined by the Cornishmen and that their united forces were routed by Egbert at Hengestdown, see *Two Saxon Chronicles parallel*, ed. C. Plummer, i. 62). Ragnar Lodbrok, contends Mr Moore, is the same person as the Turges of the Irish annals. He alluded to himself as the old pig, according to Saxo Grammaticus, and to his sons as the young pigs—here there is a Welsh play upon words, the Welsh *hwch*, pig, and *Twrch*. The Twrch Trwyth has seven sons; Ragnar had eight; but at the date in question one son was away at the Orkneys. The Welsh narrator, it is claimed, turned a disastrous visitation into a stern but successful struggle with the invader; and at the same time satirised the enemy by many sly hits, notably the comb and scissors and the razor carried by Twrch Trwyth. The dandified foreigners were shaven and shorn; the Welsh were bearded. One difficulty in the way of this pleasing hypothesis is that the hunting of the famous boar is mentioned by Nennius (see *ante*, p. 66), and the date is usually taken for granted as much earlier than 835. That there is a poem "Trwyth" in the *Book of Aneurin*, also assumed to refer to a very remote time, need not disturb us, since the oldest manuscript is not older than the thirteenth century. Now the allusion in Nennius occurs in the *Mirabilia*, which may have been added after the main recension of the *Historia Britonum* was finished, and perhaps some time later than the historic raid. M. Loth says of the allusion to the Twrch Trwyth in Nennius, "Il n'est pas inutile d'ajouter que ce passage n'appartient probablement pas à l'œuvre primitive de Nennius" (*Les Mabinogion*, p. 310, n.). Unless it can be shown that the entry in Nennius was made at an earlier date, Mr Moore's hypothesis remains plausible.

[2] A. Nutt, notes in his edition of the *Mabinogion*.

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written much later, else why drag in these undistinguished persons?[1] Arthur appears here again as a mighty figure among half-humanised men, whom he surpasses in stature like the giants of old time. Both of the two most famous battles of his reign are mentioned, Camlan and Mount Badon; but by some strange chronology Camlan, his last fatal encounter, is put long before Badon, which, we have seen, the *Annales Cambriæ*,[2] in accord with other authorities, date A.D. 516, twenty-one years before Camlan. Hosts of knights and men are seen marching, near a ford on the Severn, and one of the onlookers observes what a marvel it is "those should be there at that time who had promised to be by midday in the battle of Badon, fighting with Osla Gyllellvawr." Among the heroes named are Elphin, the son of Gwyddno, whose adventures are related in "Taliesin," and again in modern times in Peacock's *Misfortunes of Elphin*, and March, the son of Meirchion, who is a prince of Norway—that is to say, of hell. March is pretty certainly the original of Mark, the king of Cornwall, Tristan's objectionable uncle. Arthur and Owain, a northern potentate, afterwards better known as Ywain, hero of Chrétien's *Yvain*, are seen sitting at chess while the hosts engage. A youth comes from the battle-field to inform Owain that the emperor Arthur's pages and attendants are harassing his ravens. Arthur bids Owain attend to the game. Presently news is brought that the ravens are harrying and slaying Arthur's men, and Owain in turn bids the king play on. It is an enigmatic episode. Rhys interprets the host of ravens as mythic birds like the monsters in Greek legend that haunted Lake Stymphalus. Another critic brings their significance nearer home by pointing out that a raven was the device on the banners of Ragnar's sons when they were fighting against Alfred. But in the absence of Kadyriaith, the son of Saidi, we must be content to remain entertained and mystified.[3]

The narrative is less bewildering in the next group of stories,

[1] M. Loth thinks it must have been written before Madawc's death (Introduction to *Les Mabinogion*, p. 29).

[2] M. Loth has a note on the "jet-black troop . . . the men of Denmark"—"Les Danois étaient appelés par les Brittons *la nation noire*" (*Les Mabinogion*, p. 362, ii.).

[3] "Thereupon, behold, bards came and recited verses before Arthur, and no man understood those verses but Kadyriaith only, save that they were in Arthur's praise."—Lady Charlotte Guest's *Mabinogion*: "The Dream of Rhonabwy."

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The three romantic stories

which open up problems of a different kind. "The Lady of the Fountain," "Peredur the Son of Evrawc," and "Geraint the Son of Erbin" are in substance the same stories as Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain, ou le Chevalier au Lion*, *Perceval, ou le Conte del Graal*, and *Érec et Énide*. In accordance with his theory that Chrétien obtained his subjects, not from Breton rhapsodists, but at second-hand from Welsh tradition, Gaston Paris supposed that there must have been Norman or Anglo-French intermediate versions of these stories from which Chrétien on the one hand, and the authors of the *Mabinogion* on the other, derived their materials.[1] That supposition is extremely improbable and has been widely abandoned. The habit of a Welsh translator was to translate not merely into his own language but also into Welsh manners and customs, and all the picturesque and mysterious accompaniments of Welsh fabling. The earliest text of the three stories is of the fourteenth century, more than two hundred years after Chrétien wrote. That, of course, does not prove that they were not written earlier; but it makes more pertinent the question, where have the intermediate versions disappeared? It is, one grants, only an hypothesis that a myth-making Welsh poet in prose produced in "Kilhwch and Olwen" a fantastic but recognisable transfiguration of a piece of actual history. But that is not the sole instance of such a feat. The argument that in the Welsh stories the narrative is simpler, more direct, and, on the whole, more accomplished in the niceties of narrative art, is a dubious one for proving their priority. Many of the later romances show a similar improvement on metrical versions that must have been their originals. One sample of their clear and almost unmatchable mode of narration may be quoted from one of these stories before we return to the French poems that exhibit an earlier stage in the evolution of romance. It is from the well-known tale of Geraint and Enid. Geraint has just slain the earl of Limours, who had been forcibly wooing Enid, believing her husband as good as dead. They are preparing to ride off.

So he went to the house, and brought forth his horse, and mounted him, and took up Enid from the ground, and placed her upon the horse with him. And he rode forward. And their road

[1] The case is summarised by Nutt (notes in his edition of the *Mabinogion*); see also Loth (Introduction to *Les Mabinogion*, p. 53 *et seq.*).

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lay between two hedges. And the night was gaining on the day. And lo ! they saw behind them the shafts of spears betwixt them and the sky, and they heard the trampling of horses, and the noise of a host approaching. "I hear something following us," said he, "and I will put thee on the other side of the hedge." And thus he did. And thereupon, behold, a knight pricked towards him, and couched his lance. When Enid saw this, she cried out, saying, "Oh ! chieftain, whoever thou art, what renown wilt thou gain by slaying a dead man ?" "Oh ! heaven," said he, "is it Geraint ?" "Yes, in truth," said she. "And who art thou ?" "I am the Little King," he answered, "coming to thy assistance, for I heard that thou wast in trouble. And if thou hadst followed my advice, none of these hardships would have befallen thee." "Nothing can happen," said Geraint, "without the will of Heaven, though much good results from counsel."

The whole of the change from rude and ofttimes unintelligible myth to romance, with its fuller scheme, more studied effects, and more human motives is, in fact, epitomised in the stories gathered between the covers of this volume. The older stories are full of monsters and miracles and wild and grotesque fantasy ; the state of society is savage and uncouth. In the later tales we feel a new spirit stirring, the spirit of chivalric romance. The manners are courtly, the feeling is refined, the many vestiges of paganism that survive have a foreign and mysterious air. The style also is more polished, the narrative more carefully developed ; the artlessness of the primitive legends has all but disappeared. In some respects this was a gain, but it was at some cost to the subtle and adventurous imagination of the Celt. Of the ineffable glamour with which the older stories are transfused there are fewer and fewer traces in the new.

The lays of Marie de France

Marie de France was composing her lays during the period 1175-1190. She was a lady residing at the Court of Henry II., and, as already mentioned, took as her models, or paraphrased, the lays she had heard from Breton minstrels, who, according to the views of Gaston Paris, were English or Norman minstrels that had made themselves conversant with Welsh legends. It remains uncertain to what extent the lays she says she copied were finished literary compositions. The importance of her work in the development of romance is in its representing for us the episodic lays

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that preceded the longer and more elaborate poems. Chrétien de Troyes had already finished some of his biographical romances; but Marie clung to the more primitive forms. Her lays are gems of workmanship, compact and pithy as the contemporary *fabliaux*, with the fresh, unstudied charm that was to pass away in the hands of the fashionable poets still intact. A few are miniature romances, some detached episodes or anecdotes from the life of Tristan and other heroes. Such, for example, is "Le Chèvrefeuille," or "The Honeysuckle," reciting an incident in the love adventures of Tristan. It is said to have been first narrated by himself. Tristan, who has been exiled, returns and wanders in the woods and learns that the queen is expected to pass that way. So he cuts a hazel entwined with honeysuckle and writes on it this message:

That he had stood there long, and tarried and waited to espy and learn how he might behold her, for he could not live without her. With those twain it was in every wise the same as with the honeysuckle, which clings to the hazel: when it is so knotted and fixed, and is right round the stem, they well may last together; but if any one would dissever them, the hazel dies speedily, and the honeysuckle likewise. Fair love, so it is with us: nor you without me nor I without you.[1]

The queen espies the signal and finds her lover, when they make great joy together.

A perfect example of the miniature romance is the story of "The Two Lovers," which opens with the favourite situation of a king having a beloved daughter, whom he will not part with except on impossible conditions. To win the lady the suitor must carry her in his arms without resting to the top of a high hill, an ordeal that foils every aspirant. At length comes a young squire whose love the princess returns, and she privately suggests a scheme for accomplishing the feat. From a kinswoman skilled in necromancy she procures a magic drink, which, when he is fatigued, will give

[1] Que lunges ot ilec esté
E atendu e surjurnè
Pur espier e pur saveir
Coment il la peust veeir,
Kar ne poeit vivre sanz li,
D'els dous fu il tut autresi
Cume del chiévrefoil esteit
Ki a la coldre se perneit:
Quant il est si laciez e pris
E tut entur le fust s'est mis,
Ensemble pueent bien durer;
Mes ki puis les vuelt desevrer,
La coldre muert hastivement,
E li chiévrefoilz ensement.
Bele amie, si est de nus:
Ne vus sanz mei ne jeo sanz vus!

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him back all his strength. He presents himself and demands the lady, and the king consents on the specified condition. With his fair burden the stripling sets off up the mountain-side, the maiden carrying the precious phial. But so exalted is the lover with the thought of his approaching bliss that he refuses to drink the elixir; he would fain owe his happiness to himself alone.

"Drink, love," she said, "well I know you grow weary. So will you regain your strength." The youth replied, "Fairest, I feel my heart quite strong! On no wise would I delay even so long as to drink, whilst I could go three steps more."

. . . . . .

When he had climbed two parts of the way, it wanted but little that he fell not down. Often the maiden entreated him, "Love, drink your potion." But he will not heed or believe her warning. He held on his course in great anguish. He arrived on the summit, but so strained himself that he there fell down and rose again no more; the heart in his breast parted asunder.[1]

The princess thinks he has only fainted and tries to restore him with the magic drink; but he is dead. Then she laments him with bitter cries, emptying the wasted phial on the grass, so that all the country round is enriched by its beneficent virtues. Then she too dies, embracing her lover, and the king buries them in a marble tomb on the summit of the hill.

Not only Celtic folk-lore but also Christian symbolism, and perhaps Oriental magic, were taken up and assimilated in these Breton lays. Many dealt with other legends than the Arthurian. Most of the tales, indeed, that were eventually incorporated in that heterogeneous cycle were originally independent. The well-known tale of Lanval, for instance, the knight beloved by a fairy, who forgets her command never to disclose their liaison and is precipitated from the height of fortune to abject misery—this is a tale much older than the connection. "Guingamor," again, is one of

[1] "Amis," fet ele, "Kar bevez!
Je sai bien que vus alassez,
Si recuvrez vostre vertu!"
"Bele, jo sent tut fort mon quer!
Ne m'arestereie a nul fuer
Si lungement que jeo beüsse,
Pur quoi treis pas aler peüsse."
. . . . . .
Quant les dous parz fu muntez sus,
Pur un petit qu'il ne chiet jus.
Sovent li prie la meschine,
"Amis, bevez vostre mescine!"
Ja ne la volt oir ne creire
A grant anguisse od tut li eire
Sur le munt vint, tant se greva,
Iluec cheï, puis ne leva:
Li quers del ventre s'en parti.

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the numerous variants of the primeval story of a visit to the other world, and probably represents the germ of the "Bel Inconnu" story, to be touched upon later. Guingamor, who is the original of Malory's Gringamore of Avalon,[1] is a king's nephew who becomes the minion of a fairy queen, and is enticed by her on an adventure in a perilous forest, where he discovers an enchanted palace. He dwells with the elf three days and then asks leave to return; but she tells him that three hundred years have flown, that his kindred are long ago dead and his uncle's cities in ruins. Parallels are the lay of "Graelent," the voyage of Bran, and other legends of a hero's sojourn with a supernatural being in the Celtic paradise.

English imitations

About 1350-1375 Thomas Chestre, in *Sir Launfal*, made a very beautiful poem in which the incidents of Marie's "Lanval" are considerably amplified. Several other English poems were derived from Breton lays, and confined, as these were, within moderate limits, with no room for the rambling episodes that are a tiresome feature of the longer tales ridiculed by Chaucer in *Sir Thopas*, and no occasion for the listless and unappreciative rendering of the fine sentiments in French Court romances, they are among the most pleasing relics of the period.[2]

Poems of Tristan and Iseult

The poems of Béroul and Thomas illustrate the transition from episodic lays to the full-length romance, with its greater complexity of plot. Béroul's is comparatively rude and simple; but the poem of Thomas not only shows some intricacy of ground-plan, it also attests the growing interest in character and the conflict of motive. Their subject, the tragic loves of Tristan and Iseult, is often said to have come down from a very early and barbarous time, evidences of which are supposed to cling even to modern adaptations with all their fine-drawn sentiment. Gaston Paris described the legend as the offspring of some ancestral myth among the Picts or Celts, and held that it had become saturated with classical and Oriental influences by the time it was revived by the Bretons of Armorica and taken up by the Saxons and the Gallicised Normans.[3] Compared with the genteel romance of courtly love it seems a savage

[1] Brother of Linette and Dame Liones, see Malory, Bk. VII.

[2] Chaucer's "Franklin's Tale" purports to be a tale of Brittany, and the Clerk's story of Griselda has a motive like that of Marie's "Le Freine," though it was actually taken from Petrarch and Boccaccio.

[3] G. Paris, *Poèmes et Légendes du Moyen-Âge*: "Tristan et Iseut."

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and almost inhuman tale; and the report that Chrétien wrote a romance of *Tristan*, which is lost, has little to commend it but the circumstance that this is the only one of the principal legends associated with Arthur of which nothing has reached us from his pen. Béroul and Thomas essayed, in their different ways, to adapt the rugged old tale to the milder manners and the more sophisticated attitude towards romantic passion which was tending to characterise the age. What they did of more lasting consequence was to interpret the legendary events by shadowing forth the drama of motive, and deepen the pathos by showing the characters to be creatures very like ourselves. Their work, fragmentary as it is, illustrates the transition all the better in that the harsher elements of the legend were too refractory to be fully assimilated to the new spirit.

The story in outline

Tristan, King Mark of Cornwall's nephew, is not only a knight of eminent prowess, but also a young gentleman of artistic temperament who has won fame for his skill as a musician and for other accomplishments. His first great achievement is to rid the kingdom of the annual tribute of young men and maidens exacted by the king of Ireland. He fights the Morhout or Morolt (Malory's Sir Marhaus) and after a stiff combat sends him back to his ship mortally wounded. The Irish champion, who is brother to the queen of Ireland, is taken home, only to die. Tristan also is wounded by the enemy's poisoned sword, and is warned that the injury cannot be cured except in the country where the poison was brewed. So he sails to Ireland, and like Apollonius of Tyre makes his way to the king's palace as a poor castaway, by name Trantis, winning a welcome by his delightful harping. The queen and her daughter, both named Iseult, tend him and heal his wound, and he returns to Cornwall. But Mark and the Cornish nobles hate Tristan, and send him to Ireland again on a dangerous mission, no less than to seek the hand of the princess Iseult for his uncle. Accidentally the queen and her daughter find that a piece has been broken out of his sword, and a fragment left in Morolt's wound fits the gap exactly. Tristan is recognised as the slayer of the queen's brother, and it threatens to go hard with him. But, fortuntely, he has ingratiated himself with the king by destroying a dragon, and eventually he sails back to Cornwall taking Iseult with him. As they are sailing across the sea, one day they find a love potion that Iseult's mother has given to Brangwaine, the princess's lady-in-waiting, to be drunk by Mark and his bride on

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their wedding day. They both drink, and instantly fatal and uncontrollable passion overwhelms them. Never can they cease to love each other, though Iseult must become the wife of Tristan's uncle. There is no need to dwell on passing episodes, which are varied by the different romancers; such, for example, as Brangwaine's self-sacrifice in taking the place of her mistress on the wedding night—a sacrifice ill-requited by Iseult, who tries to get rid of so dangerous a confidant. Happily for our sympathy with the heroine, she repents, and makes amends to her faithful servitor. Henceforward the existence of the lovers is one continued series of stratagems to enjoy each other's company, plots of jealous and suspicious enemies, and counterplots that are usually successful. At length, however, their guilt becomes too manifest, and Tristan is banished. He is led to believe that Iseult has ceased to love him, and in despair he weds a Breton princess, Iseult of the White Hands, whose name reminds him of his former happiness. Years later Tristan is again wounded by a poisoned weapon, and, as had been covenanted between them, sends a ring secretly to his old love as a token that he is in danger of death and requires her aid. She escapes from Mark's palace and sets sail for Brittany. Meanwhile, Tristan lies at the point of death waiting impatiently for her arrival. It has been arranged that if Iseult is on board the ship shall carry white sails, if the errand has been fruitless the sails will be black. Tristan's wife, Iseult of Brittany, has wormed the secret out of his attendant. She wreaks a treacherous revenge. The ship is sighted; she bears white canvas. Tristan inquires what colour are the sails. His wife tells him black. The stricken lover utters a loud lament and falls back in the agonies of death. Iseult lands to find that she has arrived too late, and dies heart-broken on the body of her paramour.

There are variants of the final scene and different versions of almost every incident in this pathetic history; in some both characters and motives have suffered degradation. That which Malory adopted, and after him Tennyson, is one of the poorest. Wagner's well-known drama, based on the great poem of Gottfried von Strassburg, is also different, but has no ignoble ending. The main lines of the tragic recital are clear enough, however, and no reader can help being conscious of one important fact, that the story is something very different from all that we have met with hitherto. It is manifestly a story of real life, of characters that everyone can understand and sympathise with. Here there is no Merlin, no Lady

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of the Lake, no Morgan le Fay. Improbabilities there are indeed; that Mark should become the son-in-law of his former enemy is not the least of such. But that we should pay the least attention to improbabilities of that nature is in itself a proof of the essential difference of the new manner of story. The various narrators handle them with a sense that they are awkward facts calling for a proper explanation of the personal motives that have brought them about. In a bald summary the improbabilities bulk large; in the best of the romances they disappear, not only because inordinate deeds are fully accounted for by the violent passions that are raging, but also because attention is concentrated on the inner play of those passions rather than on the monstrous incidents. It is an ancient novel of passion, and in its ancient form it has hardly any superfluous complications. Of furious loves and furious hatreds, feuds, jealousies, and crimes it is full to overflowing; but the main content is its fundamental humanity.

The story is undoubtedly an old one; but the remoteness of its epoch has been challenged, together with the assumption that it belongs to the lineage of prehistoric myth. Rhys cited Welsh triads mentioning a Drystan or Trystan who was nephew and general to March, son of Meirchion, and enamoured of March's wife, Essylt.[1] On a certain occasion he acted as swineherd to March, and would not let Arthur take away any of his master's swine. March, son of Meirchion, identified with Mark, king of Cornwall, and uncle of Tristan, is, says Rhys, "according to legends, both Brythonic and Irish, an unmistakable prince of darkness." The mythic ancestry of Mark may be valid, but the presumptive early date of the triads connecting him with Tristan and also with Arthur has been questioned. Like Perceval and Lancelot, Tristan is one of those heroes who entered late into the Arthurian cycle. Critics with less determination than Rhys showed to trace every personage and incident to a mythological source, who recognise the possibility that traditional accounts of actual events were woven into the stories, and perhaps decked out with mythical trappings to match the rest of the fabric, have sought a starting-point in some episode of real life for this strange yet profoundly moving tale. Professor

[1] *Arthurian Legend*, p. 16.

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Zimmer was of opinion that the legend probably originated in occurrences during the ninth or tenth century among the Irish vikings. The name of Iseult's father, Gormund, surely sounds Danish. That the legend arose in Britain is rendered likely by the reference in Thomas's poem to the Welshman Bréri as his authority. The version of Thomas, though later in date than Béroul's, represents, nevertheless, the older form of the legend, inasmuch as Mark figures in it as king of Cornwall and Britain, and the story is not yet attached to Arthur; whereas in Béroul he is king of Cornwall only, and one of Arthur's tributary kings.[1]

[1] Evidences of an historical basis have been put forward by Mr J. H. Moore ("The Historical Basis of Tristan and Iseult," *Athenæum*, 1st Feb. 1913), from indications in early Irish records, with cross-references to the Icelandic annals and sagas, to Saxo Grammaticus, and to other mediæval documents. Only a brief abstract can be given here, and the case must be judged on its merits. Gormundus (Gottfried's Gurmon) appears to be the same person as Gorm (of the Icelandic annals) who ruled at Dublin in the absence of Ragnar Lodbrok, and also as Horm (of the Irish annals) who invaded Cornwall in 835, and was killed in an expedition to western Britain in 856. The first event is said to be confirmed by the entry under that date in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*; but see note on page 94. Gorm or Gormundus is sometimes confused with Alfred's adversary Guthrum, a later ally of Ragnar's sons, with whom Gorm had served at an earlier date. There is some reason for identifying him with Horn of the famous romance of *Horn and Rimenhild*, for like Horn he went to the Orkneys (only if a place in the Orkneys is intended by Westness, which is unlikely) and fought under a king with a daughter of very similar name. For Ragnar's daughter was called Ragenhild according to the *Landnamabok*. There seem to have been two Danish chieftains ruling at Dublin, Gormund or Gurmond and his friend and ally Sigurd Orm-i-Auga, whose name was Latinised according to Mr Moore as Sigurd Anguis-Oculus, a name supposed to have been cut down by French writers to the more familiar form Anguis (Malory's King Anguish). Mr Moore says: "It is natural that French writers should have shortened so unwieldy a name," but he adduces no contemporary authority in which the Norse name is Latinised in this form. Anguis is sometimes erroneously stated to be Iseult's father—for example, in Malory.

Chapelizod, a suburb of Dublin, still bears the name of Isolde's Chapel or Capella Ysolde; and the name of Grange Gormund perpetuates that of the neighbouring Grangetown, which was inhabited by Gormund's retainers (W. A. Henderson, "The Discovery of Isolde's Chapel," *Athenæum*, 30th May 1914). The little chantry or oratory is still in existence, a mile from Chapelizod, in an ancient burial-ground; but in a state of decay, and almost obliterated by an overgrowth of trees and ivy. It was probably built as a thank-offering for a victory over viking raiders on Dublin, out of the abundant spoils recorded to have been devoted to St Patrick. It is known that one of the two chiefs, Gorm or Anguis, went on a slave-raiding expedition to the west coast of Britain, just as is related in the Tristan story. Horm (who was pretty certainly Gorm) fell in 856, "probably in defence of his daughter." With the captives taken in the raid he built "the fortress which made Dublin a capital city, and incidentally wrecked his daughter's life." So says Mr Moore. The chapel which is the surviving witness to the tragic history was probably built, says Mr Henderson, "in a season of disillusion and heartbreak—after the marriage of Tristan with Isoud of the White Hands."

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If Zimmer's contention is substantiated, that the events related in the legend were based on fact, and that there is no need to go further back for the actual occurrences than the ninth century, then the countless mediæval and modern versions of the story of Tristan and Iseult will be among the most striking examples of fiction arising from reported fact, and not of fiction originating in ancient myth. There seems, indeed, to have been little or no adulteration of a mythological kind. Gaston Paris might well have inferred from the absence of the usual Celtic prodigies that the legend was no primeval myth. It has none of the marvels and enchantments, none of the miraculous transformations, which are the commonplaces of the tales in the *Mabinogion* and other stories of undoubted mythological descent. Such features as the healing powers attributed to Iseult and her mother were the natural exaggerations of popular fame. The love-philtre is in a different category. This was a regular device by which a minstrel sought to express the superhuman might of love, which was conceived much as Sophocles conceived it in the *Antigone*, as a fatal power, paralysing volition. By those of small imagination the figure might be taken literally ; yet, even so, its artistic value as a symbol was not lost. Whether we regard the tragic compulsion as arising from within or descending from without, our sympathies must be with the lovers, who are sufferers rather than sinners. This, manifestly, was a conception of passion very different from the fashionable cult or the half-disguised animal desire celebrated by the courtly trouveres, and one that pertained to a different state of society and a different race.

Béroul and Thomas

Béroul's poem was written about 1150 ; that of Thomas, composed about twenty years later, while more artistic in its dramatic portrayal of vehement love, already shows that fondness for dwelling on a mental crisis and extracting all its emotional possibilities which was to be a leading foible of Chrétien and his school. Thomas, in truth, can hardly be called a predecessor of that school, for Chrétien had given the world his *Érec* in 1165 or thereabouts, and *Cligès*, in which he analyses the premonitory pangs and the secret torments of love in two virginal hearts, was being written about the same time as the poem of Thomas. In this respect the *Tristan* of Thomas is a contrast to the plain, saga-like narrative of Béroul's *Tristan*. The older poet told his tale with epical

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simplicity, never dallying with shades of sentiment or romantic afterthoughts, any more than the story-tellers of the *Mabinogion* would have done. Béroul's rendering of the well-known story differs from the familiar version in that the magic philtre which enchains Tristan and Iseult in their fatal madness declines in potency after three years. Freed from her delirium, Iseult returns to King Mark : that episode is thus made clearer. And now a more human tenderness for Tristan takes the place of the old fierce transports, giving a more touching appeal to the second part of the story, which unfortunately breaks off before the climax. The clear, straightforward style is very engaging, and spoiled by no straining after effect. Characterisation there is hardly any, but a true dramatic feeling is evinced in such scenes as where Mark surprises the lovers sleeping in the forest, with Tristan's sword between them, and, melted by their apparent innocence and their misfortunes, spares his rival, taking away a ring from the shrunken fingers of Iseult as a token of his visit. Mark is a pathetic figure, in spite of his horse's ears—according to Rhys, a sign of his mythic origin.

The romance of Thomas, which is also in a fragmentary condition, presents Tristan in the anguish of exile from Iseult, and vainly seeking consolation by marrying Iseult of Brittany, whom he chose because her name reminded him of his lost mistress. The poet weakens the drama of passion by his casuistical study of the lover's emotions. Tristan cannot be true to his old love without wronging his wife, or treat Iseult of the White Hands as he should without breaking his pledge to the other Iseult. Too eloquently, the poet discourses on the strange situation of the loveless spouses and parted lovers, distilling a tender melancholy in pointed antitheses. Tristan's wife discovers that his heart is another's, her feelings being anatomised with the same elaboration. And when we come to the memorable scene where Tristan, on his sick-bed, craves to hear whether the white sail is in sight, signalling that Iseult of Cornwall is at hand to heal him of his torments, or the black sail, announcing that he will see her nevermore, Thomas prolongs the agony by picturing Iseult delayed in sight of shore by a mysterious wind. But though he dwells too lovingly upon such scenes, Thomas attains the full height of tragic passion, and is justly extolled as the finest English poet of the twelfth century.

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Later versions of the story

There were other lays dealing with this legend, in many ways the most poetical in the whole range of mediæval romance; and, midway between these and the prose version printed in 1484 and 1520, a huge compilation from miscellaneons sources was written in prose early in the thirteenth century. The finest rendering, and the most complete, during the Middle Ages was the poem of Gottfried von Strassburg, which had continuations by Ulrich von Türheim and Heinrich von Freiberg. This was based on Thomas, and enables us to eke out the lost portions of the story told by him; but, being in German, it had no great influence until Wagner found in it the inspiration for his music-drama. The Middle English metrical romance *Sir Tristrem* (*c.* 1300-1330) was also based on Thomas; its rude, shambling stanzas seem to have been meant for recitation by minstrels and not for readers, and it has hardly a touch of the deep tragedy of the story. When the epoch of prose redaction set in there was less and less of the lawless and superhuman passion of the antique legend, and more of the conventional atmosphere of the ordinary romance. The original dramatic force of the tale is frittered away in the monotony of aimless adventure; the characters grow faint and lifeless, and the metaphysic of courtly love sheds its blighting influence over all. Inasmuch as Malory was not so drastic here in his "reduction" as was his wont, the changes that came over the romances in their later phases may be studied very conveniently in his three books devoted to the Tristan story. He adopted from the manuscripts a debased version of his hero's death, describing him as stabbed by Mark as he sat harping to Iseult. This is the version Tennyson adopted. The alteration of tone and setting, from the simple and almost idyllic tale of Béroul to the motley and incongruous motives and events of Malory's three books, in which Tristan follows the stereotyped career of a knight of the Round Table, is typical of the novelties and amplifications introduced into all the romances of these three centuries by the industrious compilers of intermediate prose redactions in French.

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CHAPTER V

CHRETIEN DE TROYES

THE question of the originality of Chrétien de Troyes is bound up with the question of the insular or the Armorican source of the legends used by French poets. The theory of Gaston Paris postulates that there were intermediate romances written by the Normans, who had got their subjects from the Welsh ; the rival theory denies that there were any written materials, but contends that the French romances were composed out of the oral traditions that abounded in Armorica. Chrétien's importance in the history of romance does not, however, depend solely on a right solution of this problem. Whether he performed the constructive work of fusing heterogeneous elements into a series of stately romances, to be connected in the next age into a complex cycle, or whether his part was merely to tell existing stories in a finer way, there is no denying the importance of the works themselves as representing a decisive stage in the progress of fiction. A little earlier, the Matter of Britain was in the condition of wandering folk-lore and legendary myth, disjointed remnants of the old Celtic mythology, the links of connection lost, the ancient lineaments obliterated, the very meanings ofttimes forgotten. Strange and thrilling, beautiful and fascinating as they must have been to audiences avid of mystery and wonder and delighting in story for its own sake, they must also, in their unadapted forms, have seemed more or less unintelligible to the world of Christendom and chivalry to which they were presented. Chrétien, either with his own hand or consummating the task begun by others, took this mass of outworn material and reshaped it. Without him, possibly, Arthurian literature would still have flourished ; but it is Chrétien who stamped upon it the features that endured. He replenished the dead myths with life by bringing them into the drama of humanity. Before his date, there were legends and disconnected lays ; after Chrétien, Europe had

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the *Erec*,[1] the *Lancelot*, the adventures of Yvain, the quest of the Grail, stories as well established in their main configuration as the great dramatic stories of classical literature, and like them a standing theme for poetic treatment in future ages. Even if his powers of invention and artistic reconstruction have been exaggerated, nothing has been adduced to impugn his originality as a dramatic poet, using the given material to express his own conceptions of character and his philosophy of life.

Chrétien and contemporary poets

Little is known except indirectly about the person of Chrétien. He lived and wrote at the Court of Flanders and then at the Court of the Countess Marie, daughter of Louis VII. and of Eleanor of Aquitaine, and wife of Henry I. of Champagne. She was one of the most illustrious patrons of the serio-comic courts of love, the deliberations and decisions of which are ponderously recorded by André de Chapelin, in his *De Amore libri tres*, written at the end of the twelfth century. Chrétien was well versed in Latin literature and in the poetry of his time, as his works abundantly show, and he himself states that he translated the *Commandmanz* of Ovid and *L'Art d'Amors*, books on which the mock jurisprudence of the courts of love was largely based. Some believe that he wrote a romance of Tristan and Iseult. The metrical romance of *Guillaume d'Angleterre* is also doubtfully attributed to him. The Court of Champagne was familiar with the love poetry of the troubadours; and among other works well known to Chrétien and his circle were certain free adaptations of classical poetry, which in the love passages were already steeped in the sentiment and casuistry of *l'amour courtois*. Internal evidence shows that Chrétien had read *Énéas*, a free rendering of the *Æneid*, before he wrote *Érec*, which further borrows from the romance of *Thèbes* and the *Troie* of Benoît de Sainte-More (1165). *Cligès*, again, took toll of both these poems, and, like the *Ille et Galeron* of Gautier d'Arras, this romance was powerfully influenced by the Dido episode in *Énéas*. Professor Maurice Wilmotte found, moreover, that Gautier, one of the transitional poets, gave Chrétien copious suggestions, both for motive and situation and for actual details of the story, in *Cligès*.[2]

[1] The Geraint of the *Mabinogion* and of Tennyson.

[2] The evidence for Chrétien's indebtedness to the romantic versions of the classics (it is largely a question of relative dates) is set out in Wilmotte's *L'Évolution du Roman Française aux environs de 1150*, Paris, 1903.

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His *Éracle* was a cross between the *chanson de geste* and the *roman d'aventures*, the romantic part having a theme very like that of *Cligès*, the love of Athénaïs, wife of the Western emperor, and the young Paridès.

Chrétien's art

Enough is known, at all events, about Chrétien and his environment, and there is evidence enough existing of the kind just mentioned, to confirm the impression left by the poems themselves, that he was no bold innovator or singer of new melodies, but the most accomplished master of a flourishing school of poetry. There are signs, indeed, in Chrétien and his emulators, especially in the zest for introspective analysis, that this school was past its meridian and about to decline. Nor did he write for a public unversed in the arts of romantic narrative, or unable to appreciate the art with which a story was told as well as the story itself. If Chrétien's art was mature, and the manners, ideas and characters that he painted were those belonging to a highly civilised and highly refined society, this was the actual society that admired and read him. What brought him popularity at home, and found him translators even in Swabia and Scandinavia, was not the novelty but the fine finish of his style, and the attractiveness of the romantic material which he built into artistic works on a scale vying with the fashionable classical romances. His limpid gift of narration was adaptable to all the varied phases of his tales. He slipped easily from narration into dialogue, rather too easily, perhaps, from dialogue to soliloquy and mental analysis; and the grace and naturalness of the dialogue will be recognised in some of the quotations that follow. An eye for the beauties of nature is evinced by many passages, in which the outdoor charm of forests, launds, and pleasances is borne into the imagination rather than deliberately described. But Chrétien's full powers of sensuous suggestion were called out by the brilliance of the aristocratic life of his times; and not the most fugitive impression left by a reading of his romances is the gorgeousness of the pageantry of life in that day, with its tournaments and courtly ceremonial, magnificent castles and luxurious palaces, its kings and queens in dazzling vestments, ladies of immaculate beauty, and knights in glittering armour.

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His constructive ideas—courtly love

But it was not only this that made the work of Chrétien the most brilliant chapter in Arthurian literature. He read a new meaning into the legends; he reconstructed them in the light of an idea, and gave them a new sort of dramatic vitality. This shaping idea was the doctrine of courtly love.[1] The successive stages in the growth, culmination, and decline of this master idea in the poet's mind are represented by his five romances taken in order. In a general sense, the love motive is principal agent in the transformation of myth and folk-lore; it is the supreme vitalising element in romance. In primitive legend supernatural wonders are the chief interest; the lays and *chansons* sing of warlike adventure; in the romances sentiment and passion are the all-important theme. But Chrétien was not content merely to relate love stories; he meditated and analysed and interpreted, much in the style of a modern novelist. He was a predecessor not only of Mademoiselle de Scudéry but also of Madame de la Fayette. Hence, through his work, and the cycles of romance that were directly or at further removes founded upon it, modern fiction is ultimately affiliated, not only to mediæval poetry, but also to the oldest imaginative creations of the Aryan race.

Love in his earliest poems, *Érec* and *Cligès*, is a kind of love of which the old Celtic legends show never a trace. It is a conception of love as yet not too sophisticated; simpler, purer, and more beautiful than the tyrannous passion celebrated in the *Lancelot* and *Yvain*. There we have the apotheosis, passion turned into a religion, worship of the chosen lady usurping the supremacy of faith, duty, and feudal allegiance. Finally, in the last of his poems, there seems to be a revulsion in Chrétien's mind from the sheer paganism of this romantic cult, which divested of its fantastic ritual was but a glorification of sensual licence. The story of Perceval and the Grail is still a love-story; but love is deposed from the place of honour, and subordinated to the serious business of life. What Chrétien would ultimately have made of the story we do not know. But, whether or not he had already conceived the achievement of the Grail as a high spiritual enterprise, he had without doubt

[1] Myrrha Borodine, *La Femme et l'Amour au XIIe siècle, d'après les poèmes de Chrétien de Troyes*, Paris, 1909. is a full account of the ideas inspiring Chrétien's work, and an appreciation of his great powers of subjective portraiture.

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renounced the worldly ideals of courtly love, and given his hero a nobler ambition as his guiding star.

Method of handling the legendary material

It is an interesting study to watch Chrétien at work upon the ancient legends, and adapting them to a spirit so alien to their own. His worldly and realistic genius was radically out of harmony with Celtic mysticism ; and while he retained all the external features of the myths he stripped them of their peculiar glamour, and brought them into the cold light of actuality. He adopted them as a conventional framework—so much scaffolding ready provided. But he adopted them only in their outward forms, and ignored the primitive symbolism which had been their very essence. To Chrétien the mysteries and marvels were interesting stage properties, which he found useful in dramatising a new fashion of romance ; but they were not allowed to interfere too much with the natural course of the story. Chrétien's gay and sceptical spirit was very different from the myth-moulding genius of Wagner, but his artistic methods were identical. Each borrowed so much material, accepted so many conventions, which rendered truth of actuality unattainable, but allowed free expression to the imaginative truth of character and feeling. Except for the formal limitations they voluntarily accepted, the creative powers of both had full scope. And in Chrétien there is an exotic charm about the extravagances borrowed from the Celtic dreamland, and a piquant literary flavour in the matter-of-fact way he describes the incredible adventures, the enchantments, the giants, the marvellous beasts, and all the whimsical debris of antique myth. Like the romancers who told again the tales of Troy and of Alexander, Chrétien modernised everything. His plots may be derived from the oldest folk-lore, but they are boldly adjusted to contemporary usages. Celtic chieftains are transformed into knights-errant and sentimental lovers, fit for the refined society of the Court of Champagne. His fairy princesses and beauteous victims of enchantment may well have been identified with living members of those fashionable circles. Thus his romances are a poetic novel of manners, and offer the most vivid delineation extant of social life in that age.

"Érec et Énide"

Chrétien's *Érec et Énide*, the story most widely known in its main features from Tennyson's two idylls, "The Marriage of Geraint" and "Geraint and Enid," was produced between 1160

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and 1168.[1] Erec, one of the noblest knights in Arthur's Court, rescues Enid from an ancestral home that had fallen on evil days, and retires from the world of joust and adventure to enjoy the quiet of wedded bliss. One day he overhears Enid bemoaning the gibes which have been cast by rivals and jealous friends upon his sloth and dereliction of the duties of chivalry.

Erec loved her with such passion that he paid no heed to chivalry and went not to the jousts ; for tourneying he had no more lust ; he was bent on belying his renown. Her he made his friend and his lover, turning all his heart and mind to embracing and caressing her, and seeking no other delight. His comrades were sad thereat, and often complained among themselves that he loved her thus overmuch. . . . So much was he blamed by every one, by knights and men-at-arms, that Enid heard it bruited that her lord was become recreant from arms and from chivalry : much had he changed his manner of life. This thing weighed on her, but she durst not show a sign thereof, for her lord had taken it ill only too quickly had she said a word. So long was the thing hidden from him that it befell on a morning, there where they lay in a bed wherein they had had much bliss—mouth to mouth they lay in each other's arms, like those who loved each other well, he sleeping and she awake—she bethought her of the saying that was being spoken by the many throughout the land concerning her lord. When it came to her remembrance she could not refrain herself from weeping. Such sorrow she had and such dole that it happened by mischance she said a word for which afterwards she held herself a fool, albeit no evil was in her thought. She began to survey her lord up and down, the well-made form and the goodly mien, and wept with such a violence that the tears fell upon her lord's breast, saying, " Alas ! wretch that I was to leave my native land ! What did I come here to seek ? Well might the earth swallow me, when the best of all knights, the bravest and the noblest, the most free and courteous that was ever count or king, has given up all knightliness for my sake ! Verily, I have brought a curse upon him, though I would not have done this for aught in the world." When she had said, "Wretch that I am ! " she was silent, and said no more.

Now Erec slept not heavily, and heard her plainly as he slumbered. He woke up at the word and marvelled much to see her weep so bitterly ; and he asked her : "Tell me, fair sweet love,

[1] Before 1155 (Förster), after 1160 (Wilmotte), 1165 (Borodine), 1168 (Paris).

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why weep you in this manner? What cause have you for anger or grief? For sure I would fain know. Tell me, sweet love, and see thou keep naught from me. Why saidst thou I was wretched? It was meant for me and no one else: well did I hear the word." Then was Enid sore troubled, and in great fright and dismay. "Sir," said she, "I know not what you are speaking of." "Lady, why dost thou excuse thyself? To hide it will do no good. You have wept, that do I plainly see; not for nothing wouldst thou weep—and in sleeping I heard the word you spake." "Ah, fair sir, you never heard it, but well do I believe this was a dream." "Now, thou dost put me off with falsehoods; I do hear thee lie right openly. But thou wilt repent it later if thou dost not declare the truth." "Sir, since thou dost fret so much, I will tell thee the truth, and will hide it no longer; but much I fear it will grieve you. In this country all say, the dark, the fair, and the ruddy, that it does you great hurt that you forsake the use of arms; your honour is thus become abased. A year ago all men were wont to say that in all the world they knew not a better or a braver knight; nowhere was your peer to be found. But now all go mocking you, old and young, small and great, all call you recreant. Think you then that it does not grieve me when I hear such despite of thee? It weighs upon me when they say it, and for this it weighs the more that they lay the blame of it on me—I am blamed, and that irks me—and all do say that it is because I have taken and enslaved you that you have lost all your worth, and care for naught else. It behoves you take a different course, so that you may wipe out this shame and regain your old renown; for I have heard you blamed overmuch. Yet never durst I show you this thing. Many times when I thought of it I had to weep for dole; and hence had I such grief now that I could not contain myself; so said I that thou wast unfortunate." "Lady," said he, "you were right, and those who blame me have justice. Apparel yourself forthwith; prepare to take horse. Arise hence and put on the fairest robe you have, and have the saddle put on your best palfrey."

Now is Enid in great affright. She ariseth very sad and pensive, and blameth and vexeth herself all alone for the folly she has uttered; like a goat scratching herself till she cannot lie at ease. "Ha, foolish wretch," says she, "I was then in too good case, so that I wanted of nothing! Ah, God! for what did I hazard so much as to dare utter such madness? Ah, God! did not my lord then love me well enough? In faith, alas! he loved me but too well." [1]

[1] *Érec und Énide*, ed. W. Förster, Halle, 1890, ll. 2432-2595. For the text and the prose *remaniement* see Appendix A to this chapter.

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This is not the ethereal Enid, be it noticed, of Tennyson's idyll. Chrétien's Enid is aware that she has let slip something which may have awkward consequences ; so she dissembles. Yet there is a blot on Tennyson's story from which Chrétien's is free, for the modern poet drew his version from the *Mabinogion*, as Englished by Lady Charlotte Guest, and there the motive of Erec's outbreak of wrath and of the indignant pilgrimage on which he sets forth is nothing more than vulgar jealousy: the bridegroom's suspicions are aroused, forsooth, on his honeymoon, when he thinks he overhears Enid lamenting that she is parted from one she loves better. For the sake of comparison, the passage from the *Mabinogion* is worth quoting, as well as for its gracious style. The writer may have failed to grasp the full dramatic possibilities of his subject ; but he was instinctively an artist, and his simple recital, set side by side with the lifeless and unintelligent paraphrase of Chrétien in the prose redaction,[1] shows up the dullness of the clerical prose into which many of the romances were turned at a later date.

And one morning in the summer time, they were upon their couch, and Geraint lay upon the edge of it. And Enid was without sleep in the apartment, which had windows of glass. And the sun shone upon the couch. And the clothes had slipped from off his arms and his breast, and he was asleep. Then she gazed upon the marvellous beauty of his appearance, and she said, "Alas, and am I the cause that these arms and this breast have lost their glory and the warlike fame which they once so richly enjoyed!" And as she said this, the tears dropped from her eyes, and they fell upon his breast. And the tears she shed, and the words she had spoken, awoke him ; and another thing contributed to awaken him, and that was the idea that it was not in thinking of him that she spoke thus, but that it was because she loved some other man more than him, and that she wished for other society, and thereupon Geraint was troubled in his mind, and he called his squire ; and when he came to him, "Go quickly," said he, "and prepare my horse and my arms, and make them ready. And do thou arise," he said to Enid, "and apparel thyself; and cause thy horse to be accoutred, and clothe thee in the worst riding-dress that thou hast in thy possession. And evil betide me," said he, "if thou returnest here until thou knowest whether I have lost my strength so completely as thou didst say. And if it be so, it will then be easy for thee to seek the

[1] *Érec und Énide.*

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society thou didst wish for of him of whom thou wast thinking." So she arose, and clothed herself in her meanest garments. "I know nothing, lord," said she, "of thy meaning." "Neither wilt thou at this time," said he.[1]

Without being formally didactic, as Spenser was, for example, in the *Faerie Queene*, Chrétien maintained a definite and consistent ethical attitude; his stories always have an idea at the back of them; and, whether his sympathies are entirely with his characters or whether he regards them with a critical or ironic or quizzical eye, those characters always act upon consistent and intelligible motives. He was rather like an historical novelist doing his best to reproduce the externals of a bygone period; but he is unable to depict any but the personalities of his own day, troubled by the problems of life that he sees around himself. Hence, as a truthful picture of the Arthurian age his romances are naught, but as pioneer novels of character and motive they are admirable. Tennyson's way was the exact opposite. He set to work in the contemporary fashion of a Gothic restorer to tell a story in the way he thought a mediæval poet would, or should, have told it. He painted Enid and Geraint as he thought the mediæval story-teller meant them to be. But his efforts to archaise failed, since he could not recapture the mediæval point of view; whilst he modernised unintentionally, and drew characters that are at once archaic and modern—in short, not reasonable or intelligible beings at all. Geraint is an utterly unreasonable and overbearing husband, with streaks of nobility that are out of drawing; Enid plays the part of a patient Griselda, in circumstances that do not make that part admirable. Chrétien, on the other hand, shows us in Erec a life-like figure of the man of action suddenly aroused out of his fit of uxoriousness, and sternly bending his will to the proper end of life —to perform his duties as an upholder of law and order in a world but partially civilised. Enid is no foolish, submissive wife, the mere creature of her lord's behests; though, as Meredith would have put it, she is still one of those who will be the last thing civilised by man. She perceives that, after all, life is serious, and dalliance must not be allowed to interfere with the appointed mission of a knight and an aristocrat. Erec in his own mind is deeply

[1] Lady Charlotte Guest's *Mabinogion*, "Geraint, son of Erbin."

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shamed and indignant at his lapse from manhood ; he adopts stern methods, but teaches Enid to respect as well as idolise him, and to accept her own place as subordinate to his greater responsibilities.

> " I could not love thee, dear, so much,
> Lov'd I not honour more."

Cligès

In the next romance, *Cligès*, which really consists of two stories, two variations of a single theme, the high chivalric ideal is deposed from its place of superiority, and love becomes the absolute lord of life. Written about 1168,[1] it is founded on a Byzantine tale, and its association with Arthurian story is late and arbitrary. The first part is a sort of prologue relating the loves of the father and mother of Cligès, Alexander, eldest son of the emperor of Constantinople, and Soredamours, King Arthur's niece. The youth and maiden are love-smitten, but from ignorance and bashfulness dare not confess it. Soredamours is delightfully virginal and tender, Alexander poetically in love. In many respects the tale is a charming analysis of the growth and ripening of affection ; but, while it shows off Chrétien's mastery of the psychology of sentiment, it is also an epitome of his mannerisms. All the absurdities of *l'amour courtois*—modish sentiment, not deep human passion, the romantic cult with its elaborate etiquette—are foreshadowed in this preliminary study. The affectations of the seventeenth-century pastoral and of the hot-house romances of La Calprenède and Mademoiselle de Scudéry, with the famous Carte de Tendre, are discoverable in germ in his anatomy of what Chrétien significantly calls the love malady of Soredamours. Listen to the heroine soliloquising, in euphuistic dialectic :

Great is Alexander's tribulation, but the lady's is not a whit less. All night she is in such anguish that she can neither rest nor sleep. Love has put into her heart a passion and a frenzy ; it tortures and torments her, so that all night she weeps and wails ; and she casts herself down and then leapeth up again, that it lacked but little that her heart leaveth her. And when she has travailed so long, and sobbed and swooned and leaped up and sighed, then in her heart she bethinks her for whom it is and for what manner of man that Love hath her in his grip. . . . " Fool ! " she says, " what is it to me if this youth be debonair and wise, courtly and brave ? All that

[1] *Circa* 1166 (Wilmotte), 1155 (Förster).

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is to his honour and advantage. And what does his beauty matter to me? . . . And am I then for this his love? Nay, no more than any other man's. Why then do I think more about him, if he be not more pleasing to me than any other? I know not; I am all bewildered; for never yet have I thought so much on any man living in the world. And of my own will, were I to see him every day, never would I wish him to quit my sight, so pleasant is it when I behold him. Is this love? Yea, I trow that it is." [1]

There are similar banquets of sensibility in the main story, which relates how Fenice, who loves and is beloved by Cligès, finds herself compelled to marry his uncle, the emperor. Fenice impersonates the sanctity of love. She resolves to be true in heart to her lover, and at the same time not to betray her husband. Nothing can persuade her to accept the sexual morality of later French fiction, and divide herself between two men. She preserves her virginity, and remains a wife only in name, by the device of a magic potion administered to the husband, who is drowsed in sleep on the wedding night and in dreams has all the joys of possession. Cligès, when she avows her passion, would anticipate the hour of freedom. The conflict between them evokes long antiphonies of the love rhetoric in which Chrétien delighted, while the struggle in the maiden's heart is the theme of an acute mental study, more searching than the introductory study of Soredamours.

The end of the tale is happy. The usurping husband dies, and the pair return to Constantinople to live, not only as husband and wife, emperor and empress, but also as lovers until death. *Cligès* is outside the regular succession of the cyclic stories which became the foundation of the prose romances, but is interesting in the development of fiction as an early approximation to the modern novel. By itself it would justify M. Lanson's amusing description of the author as a "Bourget of the twelfth century."

The romance of Lancelot and Guenevere

Le Chevalier de la Charrette, composed about 1170,[2] is in the direct line of succession. Here the magnificent paladin Lancelot comes upon the scene, the subject being the famous amour of Lancelot and Guenevere, destined to become the central episode

[1] *Cligès*, ed. W. Förster, Halle, 1884, ll. 873-926. For text see Appendix B to this chapter.

[2] Förster; Gaston Paris says 1172.

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of Arthurian story, and the one contributing any sort of unity to that miscellaneous cycle. Chrétien's liege lady, the Countess Marie, for whom it is alleged he had more than a courtier's fealty, gave him, so he says, the matter and sense of the story.[1] Here courtly love is raised to the highest pinnacle as the arbiter of life, but it is a love far different from the pure and tender affection extolled in *Cligès*. One may well believe that in Lancelot's ecstatic adoration of the imperious Guenevere Chrétien expressed at once some overmastering passion of his own and resentment at the injustice meted out to him by its object. Is he to be taken literally in this apotheosis of beauty, this repudiation of all ties in the name of love? Surely his exaggeration and rodomontade are to be understood as covert satire, or as the sardonic lament of one who has spent himself in a thankless service. All the inspiration of the poem is concentrated on the figure of Lancelot; towards the haughty Guenevere Chrétien's attitude is unsympathetic and even harsh. She is portrayed as an arrogant and capricious beauty, with no regard for Lancelot beyond the passionate impulse of a sensuous woman. She weeps when she fears that she has lost him for ever ere she has once held him in her arms; but she is no Enid, to sacrifice all for her lover, to die rather than survive him. When she finds that he has not fallen a victim to the perils guarding her from his approach, and he applies for his well-earned recompense, she dissembles her real emotions still, and yields to him at last in the grudging spirit of one who can no longer withhold the guerdon of infinite devotion and endurance.

This incident of the cart, which gives its name to the *Conte de la Charrette*, is passed over very lamely in Malory's version of the Lancelot story; it is the cardinal point of Chrétien's. Guenevere has been carried off by Méléagant (Malory's Mellyagraunce). Lancelot, who, with Gawain, at once flies in pursuit, loses his horse, and is in dire straits how to hold on his way. In this emergency the knights are met by a cart, a vehicle held in peculiar abhorrence because it was used for carrying malefactors to the scaffold. Invited by the dwarf driving the cart to mount, Lancelot

[1] Matière et san l'an done et livre
La contesse, et il s'antremet
De panser si qui rien n'i met
Fors sa painne et s'antancion (ll. 26-29).

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is in a dilemma. Shall he enter the cart and disgrace his knighthood, or reject any expedient that may help in the quest of his lady? He hesitates but a moment, and then gets into the vehicle; but on the moment of hesitation more depends than he can guess. He fights his way through portentous obstacles; he resists the blandishments of a damsel sent to seduce him, and crosses undaunted the terrible bridge, sharp as an upturned blade, stretched between him and the castle where Guenevere lies immured. When, after these prodigies of hardihood, he reaches the queen and vanquishes the ravisher, Guenevere refuses to speak to him. He thinks she is offended at the public disgrace to which he has exposed himself. The real cause of her displeasure is his transient reluctance to sacrifice his dignity in her service. Gawain, who had set out with him, was much too fine a gentleman to do so. Lancelot had infringed the laws of courtly love, an offence to be washed out in sorrow and suspense. We are reminded of the codes of amorous etiquette invented centuries later in the romances of gallantry. When at last the long-suffering knight is admitted to the chamber of the queen he casts himself down before her in submissive worship, as a pagan before the shrine of Olympian beauty or a Christian devotee before the eucharist.

Guenevere's abduction and rescue was an old story, her champion is new. In early tradition, as already noted,[1] Melwas, a monarch from the infernal world, euphemistically styled king of the Summer Country, carried her off to Avalon. In the *Lanzelet* of Ulrich von Zatzikhoven, written after Chrétien's story, but following older versions of the legend, she is borne away to a magic castle defended by a multitude of serpents, and she is recaptured by the aid of a magician. In its original forms, the rape of Guenevere is like the rape of Persephone. As told by Malory, the tale has become very commonplace. The queen is captured in the fields by Westminster, and taken to a stronghold seven miles off on the other side of the Thames. But Chrétien's Méléagant retains some traces of his mythic attributes, and elopes with her to Logres, the country from which no man returns.

Her original rescuer from durance appears to have been Gawain, who somehow, in the capacity of her lover, became

[1] See p. 76.

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confounded with Modred.[1] Geoffrey of Monmouth, Wace, and Layamon all agree in implicating both Modred and Guenevere in a guilty liaison. Malory gives a weak rendering of the Mellyagraunce-Melwas episode, and brings in the Modred affair in another connection and in a totally altered shape. Lancelot was the creation of French romanticism. He is entirely a Frenchman, son of a French king, and embodiment of the knightly virtues most exalted by the principles of courtly love. "He was deliberately designed to usurp and has usurped the place of the Celtic or British hero Syr Gawain, who had until then been unanimously acclaimed the best knight in the world."[2] The rescue of the queen was ancient myth; the loves of Lancelot and Guenevere were a romantic invention. Authorities differ as to whether Chrétien was the first to deal with this famous amour. Certainly, his powers of invention were not remarkable, and even his ability to tell a story coherently is least evident in this of all his stories. Gaston Paris expressed the opinion, which was widely accepted, that Chrétien was the first to introduce it into Arthurian literature.[3] Such a story was an admirable illustration of the fashionable doctrines of knightly devotion; it might conceivably have been evolved, more or less deliberately, as a pendant to the popular story of Tristan and Iseult. But the formidable verdict of Dr Sommer is against this. He holds that the famous liaison "had already been introduced by the writer of the *Lancelot*, who transferred to Lancelot the part played by Gosengos or some other adorer of Guenevere in the early history of Arthur known to him."[4] This, of course, implies that the *Lancelot* was already existent, at least in part, although it took the episode of the *Charrette* later from Chrétien.[5]

We have seen that the romance of Lancelot and Guenevere was suggested as a theme to Chrétien by the Countess Marie.[6]

[1] J. L. Weston, *The Legend of Sir Lancelot*, vi.

[2] H. Oskar Sommer, Introduction to *The Vulgate Versions of the Arthurian Romances*, i. 8.

[3] *Romania*, xii. 459-534.

[4] Introduction to *Vulgate Versions*, i. 8, footnote.

[5] The persistent legend that Walter Map was the author of the prose *Lancelot* may be narrowed down to the possibility that he wrote an Anglo-French poem giving the story of Lancelot and Guenevere. The theory that a Court scandal was wrapped up in the story loses no plausibility from such a supposition.

[6] See p. 119.

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That lady was a daughter of Louis VII. of France and of Eleanor of Aquitaine, to whom Wace dedicated his *Brut*. Eleanor had been divorced from Louis and was now wife of Henry II. of England. Before she became Queen of England she had a reputation for flighty and compromising behaviour, and popular tradition accused her of worse. It may have been at a much later period that the tale of her scandalous relations with William Marshal, earl of Pembroke, arose ; it may even be that a floating tradition of a queen's adultery with a courtier attached itself to her memory simply from her early character for frivolity, or because she was notoriously at variance with her husband, or for other accidental reasons. The report that she seduced this brave and handsome young nobleman, in all respects of person and prowess a worthy peer of Sir Lancelot, and that she had a son by him, whose existence was known to a small circle, was current at a later date in the ballad, "Queen Eleanor's Confession." [1] Believing she is about to die, the queen points to one of her children:

"Do you see yonders little boye,
A tossing of the balle ?
That is earl marshalls eldest sonne,
And I love him the best of all."

Was it current in her lifetime ? When Countess Marie gave Chrétien the substance and spirit of the tale of Lancelot and Guenevere, had she her mother in mind ? Baseless except in malicious whispers though the insinuation may have been, such an innuendo might have been intended, both in the story as given to Chrétien and in the previous version, if there was one. It would not be the only instance of contemporary allusions to be read between the lines of romance. The author of the Thornton *Morte Arthure* put the figure of Edward III. before his hearers when he painted King Arthur, and the campaign of Cressy when he described the war with Lucius. Spenser and Tennyson took pains to make clear their application of leading characters and incidents in the *Faerie Queene* and the *Idylls of the King* to the life and even the personalities of their times. Mademoiselle de Scudéry was not the only prose romancer to paint contemporary portraits under fictitious names.

[1] Printed in Percy, Child, etc.

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One student of Arthurian origins, who has already been quoted, would go further, and claims to have discovered "a chronicle preserved for centuries in the archives of an ancient Irish monastery," which proves, not merely that such things were hinted at, but even that they were facts. The son was Perceval, who comes into Arthurian story about this date, not, indeed, as the son of Lancelot, for about his fatherhood the tales are confused and contradictory, but as the son of the Widow Lady. By that mysterious appellation he is said to have been known in Ireland, where he was sent, on his coming of age, and put under the guardianship of an aged knight Gorneman, a relation of Isabel, the great Irish heiress whom Earl Marshal had recently espoused. Gorneman is, of course, the Gurnemanz of Chrétien's *Perceval*. The young man is related to have tried his friends with his simplicity and childishness in the very ways characteristic of the Perceval stories. He was given employment as official collector of the papal taxes in Ireland, and is reported to have been set upon and slain some time before 1204, the year of Eleanor's death. A mural monument, adorned with the English royal arms, in Holy Cross Abbey, near Thurles, is pointed out as his tomb; at any rate tradition and manuscript authority agree, we are told, in the belief that a scion of the English royal stock is buried there. The *princeps innocens* of Holy Cross is identified with Pierce the Fair of the Irish annals.[1]

The theory is buttressed by a large number of correspondences in geographical features, place-names, traditional associations, and certain documents, inscriptions, and similar monuments of conjectural authenticity. The numerous Pearcetowns and Marshalistons in that part of Ireland are supposed to be named after the young Perceval and his father. The Turning Castle and Lady Castle "still exist" in the immediate neighbourhood of Esker, where Perceval went to the Lady of Esclaire, Gorneman's niece. The Black Castle, or the castle of the Black Hermit, is also located, and so is the site of the Grail Castle at Corbonic or Carbonek, which is identified with Corbinstown or Colbinstown, which Malory says was five miles from the Castle of Case. The writer discovered a Well of Case nine miles from Colbinstown, and nine

[1] W. A. Henderson, "The Identification of Sir Perceval" (*Athenæum*, 29th August and 19th September 1914, and 6th March 1915).

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miles is not bad as an Irishman's estimate of the right distance. He follows the routes of Perceval, Lancelot, and Gawain on the map of Ireland almost as convincingly as M. Bédier follows the pilgrim routes indicated in the *chansons de geste*; and, at all events, gives colour to the possibility that the original scenery of the Grail romances was no dreamland but actual localities in Ireland with which the writer or writers were familiar. Whether the historical as well as the topographical data can be substantiated it is too early to predict; indeed, the only relevance of the theory here is in its suggestion of the ways in which large fragments of the real world were incorporated into the world imagined by the romancers.

"Yvain, ou le Chevalier au Lion"

Chrétien's masterpiece is *Yvain*, composed about 1172-1173.[1] This is a story in which love is still stronger than worldly ambition or the claims of honour, and the woman who is the object still appears as a capricious sovereign, only to be propitiated for a moment of forgetfulness by years of devotion. It retains more of the stuff of Celtic romance than any other of Chrétien's stories. More than any other, also, it affords in its pauses and transitions evidence that Chrétien worked upon Breton lays which related stories that had drifted to Armorica from Wales. The scene is vaguely laid in the mysterious forest of Broceliande; but the starting-points of the adventures, Carduel (Cardiff) en Galles and Chester indicate the country of origin. In this strange region the lady who is the heroine, living under the law by which the safety of her dominions depends on the guardianship of a magic fountain, recalls the enchanted princesses in other Breton lays. It may be that "The Lady of the Fountain," in Lady Charlotte Guest's *Mabinogion*, is a Welsh recension of Chrétien's story; but there are some slight grounds for believing that it represents an intermediate version based on disconnected tales. Yvain appears under the name of Hiwenus[2] in Geoffrey's history, and Wace mentions him as a knight on whom Arthur bestows the crown of Scotland; whence it is clear that some portion of his tale had been admitted into Arthurian romance before Chrétien. The magic fountain and the slab, the sprinkling of which with water is followed by a terrific thunderstorm, has analogues in other Celtic legends and has been

[1] Gaston Paris says 1173; Professor Förster, between 1164 and 1173.
[2] Usually given as "Eventus" in our defective English editions of Geoffrey.

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compared to rain-making incidents in the folk-lore of many races.[1] The crucial episode of the bereaved lady who accepts as husband the knight who made her a widow, suggests to one critic that the story is but a variant of the antique legend of him "who slew the slayer and shall himself be slain"; whilst others see in it an adaptation of the popular tale of the matron of Ephesus, the widow quickly consoled.[2] But the slightly satirical motive discernible in Chrétien's portrait of the lady is not a feature of the story in its Welsh form. The lion, it has been learnedly argued, was probably derived from the legend of Androcles. Gaston Paris associated the main subject of the story with the lay of Guingamor and the Tannhaüser legend; and other folk-lorists agree in placing it among the Celtic family of stories of the other world.

Whencesoever Chrétien got his materials he handled them with easy mastery, and the fairy atmosphere and enchantments borrowed from old myth contribute romantic charm to a story which, in essentials, is a story of human nature. How gracefully he could recount a childish legend at which his *esprit gaulois* smiled while he repeated it is shown in the incident of Yvain's championship of the lion, whom he saves from a serpent's murderous coils. The beast follows him ever after as his slave.

When he had delivered the lion, he thought he must needs fight him, and that the lion would fall upon him; but the beast had no such thought. Hear what the lion did then. He demeaned himself in meek and courtly wise, for he put on the semblance of surrendering to him, proffering his paws clasped together, and bowing his head to the ground. He stood on his two hind feet, and then kneeled down, wetting all his face with tears in his humility. Messire Yvain perceives that the lion in truth is thanking him and humbling himself before him for the serpent that he slew, and for saving him from death; and this adventure pleased him much.[3]

[1] The rain-making ceremonies are, or were not long ago, still carried out in times of drought, on the alleged spot in Brittany where a ruined dolmen (the Perron de Belenton) represents the tomb of Merlin, and hard by, a fountain (of Baranton or Belenton) is said to utter moans when there is a storm brewing. Here, near Plélan, is the wood of Paimpoul, remnant of the great forest of Broceliande (see S. Baring-Gould, *A Book of Brittany*, 1901, pp. 265-269).

[2] See J. L. Weston, *Legend of Sir Lancelot*, pp. 69-81.

[3] *Yvain*, ed. C. W. Förster, Halle, 1887, ll. 3388-3407; for text see Appendix C to this chapter.

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The story is how Yvain hears at Arthur's Court of the magic fountain of Baranton, from a knight who had been severely handled by the champion defending it, and how he goes off secretly to try the adventure. He throws water on the slab by the fountain, and, after the thunder and rain that follow, is set upon by a powerful knight, whom he overthrows. Sorely wounded, the knight flees to his castle, with Yvain in hot pursuit. The knight gets in safely, but a portcullis falls, shearing the pursuer's horse in twain, and Yvain finds himself imprisoned between iron walls, whence he is rescued by a damsel by means of a ring that has the power of rendering him invisible. The damsel is the handmaid of Laudine, lady of the country and wife of the disabled knight. Himself unseen, Yvain witnesses the funeral of the knight, who dies of his wounds, and incontinently he falls in love with the widowed countess. The damsel acts as go-between and so the comedy begins.

Laudine is a life-like picture of a certain type of woman. Chrétien sets forth, with the art of an accomplished novelist, the rapid stages by which she is coaxed by the wiles of her handmaiden, who knows her mistress's foibles only too well, from grief and rage to intense curiosity about the mysterious aggressor who was stronger than her lord, and at last to passionate desire. She loves before she has seen him. Fickleness, desire to be loved, and the feminine impulse to return passion for passion throw her into the arms of her unknown suitor. She dissembles her motives, however, and excuses her haste to be married again on the ground of the urgent need for a new champion to defend the fountain, on the immunity of which the safety of the realm depends. To her council of old men and timid vassals this is a valid reason, and the marriage is celebrated with pomp and rejoicing. The *Mabinogion* version is not so unkind to the lady, who simply weds the knight from motives of policy, as he is the only competent defender of her territory available.

The sequel is interesting, but must be briefly summarised. This is Chrétien's best example of the biographical romance, in which the whole career of a knight is related, down to the time when he finally retires from the Arthurian Court and the world of chivalry and settles down in comfort as the husband of a lady possessed of lands and wealth. Yvain has a great deal to go through before he reaches this happy consummation. At his wedding with

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Laudine he pledges himself never to desert her, and never to be absent for more than a year. Shortly after, King Arthur, attended by his knights, comes to look for the absentee. They arrive at the fountain and there is the usual prodigy, Yvain, of course, appearing as the rightful defender and overthrowing the seneschal Kay. When they recognise their old brother-in-arms the company readily accept his invitation and are conducted to the castle, where Yvain lives in state with Laudine. There is a round of festivities, at the end of which Yvain is persuaded, much to his lady's chagrin, to rouse himself for a space from his life of ease and sloth and return with Arthur to the world of action. He binds himself to be absent only a twelvemonth. Unhappily Yvain, engrossed in tourneys and adventures, lets the appointed day of his return slip by. When he realises what has happened he is stricken with remorse ; but to Laudine the offence is unpardonable. She denounces him to King Arthur and forbids him ever to see her again. Yvain wanders about in despair, and in the course of his adventures becomes the rescuer of the lion and gains his cognomen of the Chevalier au Lion, a name of power for knightly fortitude. Laudine remains implacable, so Yvain tries to regain her by stratagem. He journeys to the magic fountain, which is now without a protector, and sprinkling water on the slab awakens a terrific tempest. Laudine is in deadly fear and consents to the proposal of her maid, whose friendship for Yvain has been confirmed by fresh obligations, to call to her aid that famous paladin, the Knight of the Lion, whom she little recks to be her hated lord. Thus the dissevered pair are brought together again, but the lady does not forgive the erring husband until he has humbled himself to the dust. In his portrayal of her rancour and the hard-won pardon granted to the penitent husband and lover, Chrétien furnishes another acute study of the female heart, a counterpart to his analysis of the haughty Guenevere. Once more our sympathies are set upon the lover, at the mercy of a mistress who insists on every article of the punctilious code of love. Chrétien's poem was translated into northern English during the first half of the fourteenth century, in the abbreviated romance of *Yvain and Gawain*. The drama of sentiment here takes a secondary place to the recital of knightly adventure.

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The last of Chrétien's romances, *Perceval le Gallois*, or the *Conte del Graal*,[1] is important in literary history as the story in which the Grail makes its epiphany. Of the vast compilation into which the poem ultimately grew Chrétien wrote rather more than 10,000 lines, breaking off before he had given any lucid explanation of the Grail or any forecast of the plot; Wauchier de Denain contributed 35,000 more, Manessier another 10,000, and Gerbert de Montreuil about 15,000 lines. In this leviathan among romances are embodied versions of several legends representing various degrees of antiquity and by no means consistent with each other, and the question of their provenance is obscure. Chrétien said that he received the story from his patron, Count Philip of Flanders:

> Ce est li contes del Graal
> Dont li quens: li bailla le livre:
> Orrés comment il se delivre.

It was the usage of romancers so to refer to some authority for their assertions; but the researches of many critics have made it pretty certain that in this instance the poet's materials had already been put into narrative form, and that Chrétien had little to do with the invention or even the reconstruction of the story. Already the popular story of the birth and upbringing of the rustic Perceval, son of the widow lady, had in all likelihood been connected with the legend of the Grail, with which it had nothing to do originally. Already a group of stories on the exploits of Gawain seem to have been transferred to the new hero. Chrétien, after his wont, seized upon all this romantic material and used it for what it was worth for his own purposes, and was perhaps quite unaware of the mystic inner meaning of the Grail legend. Whether the Grail itself was originally pagan, and how, if so, the heathen talisman became identified with the vessel that received the blood of Christ, are questions that will be touched on later. The identification was, almost certainly, reached long before Chrétien and Wauchier. In the hands of Chrétien's continuators the *Conte del Graal* grows more and more mystical; and in the poems of Robert de Borron, a little later, and in the prose romances, the symbolical element gives

[1] Gaston Paris puts this at 1174-1175 (*Journal des Savants*, 1902, p. 306).

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the whole narrative a predominantly religious character, Galahad the apostle of purity ousting the too-earthly protagonist Perceval, and the conclusion of the quest exemplifying the apotheosis of chastity and Christian devotion.

In *Syr Percyvelle of Galles*, an English metrical romance of the thirteenth century, the folk-tale of the clownish knight and his feats and adventures is told in its primitive form, unmixed with the legend of the Grail. Relics of still more archaic traditions have been pointed out in the well-known "Peredur the Son of Evrawc," in the *Mabinogion*, though whether that was taken from Chrétien and deliberately archaised, or drawn from the same body of tradition and consciously or unconsciously assimilated to Chrétien's narrative, are questions still in dispute. Anyhow, the Welsh story-teller has no mystical interpretation to offer of the episode corresponding to a crucial incident in the Grail romances. This takes place in the Castle of the Lame King, whom Perceval found sitting beside a lake in which his attendants were fishing. The Lame King is the Rich Fisher or Fisher King of other romances. As they discourse in the hall two youths enter, "bearing a spear of mighty size, with three streams of blood flowing from the point to the ground," after which two maidens carry in a salver containing a man's head swimming in blood. Not till the end of the story is Peredur informed that this was the head of a kinsman, slain by the Sorceresses of Gloucester, on whom he duly wreaks vengeance. Thus "Peredur" has every appearance of a vengeance story pure and simple. But in the middle of the tale is a strange reference to the first incident, when the Maid of the Mountain upbraids Peredur for not having asked the meaning of the spear and the other wonders :

> Hadst thou done so, the king would have been restored to health and his dominions to peace. Whereas from henceforth he will have to endure battles, and conflicts, and his knights will perish, and wives will be widowed, and maidens will be left portionless, and all this because of thee.[1]

Chrétien's romance likewise has the procession with the spear, but the Grail appears in a very different guise. Instead of the

[1] *Mabinogion*, "Peredur the Son of Evrawc." *Cp.* the Spear of Vengeance that appears to Sir Bors, with the Grail, in Malory, Bk. XI., chap. v.

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grisly apparition of the head swimming in blood, the Grail is something sacred and mysterious, though Chrétien leaves the secret of what it was to be revealed in a later portion that he never wrote. But in his version also, the misfortunes of a sick king and a desolated land, common to all the Grail romances, are made to depend upon the hero's failure to ask a question. How the king fell sick, and whether the land was or was not desolate before Peredur had the opportunity of asking the question, remains unexplained. It is one of the perplexities and incoherences that suggest the existence of an antecedent narrative, which Chrétien and the author of "Peredur" followed in a blundering way. But further consideration of this point must be left till we come to the romances in which the Grail is the focus of interest.

Chrétien's story of Perceval, which he wrote last, perhaps in advanced years,[1] shows the romancer abjuring his creed of love as the supreme object in life; and, whether he meant to give a deep spiritual significance to the Grail or not, at all events putting before his knightly hero as the goal of endeavour the performance of duty and the attainment of spiritual perfection, without which he must remain unworthy of his high commission. Perceval loves Blancheflor; but the lady is sacrificed, and the lover holds passion in check at the call of holier things. It is not worth while following the complicated incidents of the story. Enough to record this remarkable change in the poet of courtly love, an ethical revulsion at least, if not a change of soul, pointing towards the complete renunciation of the flesh and the sanctified devotion which are the ideals of the coming Grail romances.

To illustrate further this account of Chrétien's part in the development of the romance of Britain, let us compare his rendering of a striking incident in Perceval's early life with one from the *Mabinogion* and one from a French prose romance.

The Perceval legend, it should be remembered, was originally the story of a rude, untaught youth, who acquired the practice of arms and the graces of courtesy in the hard school of experience. Readers of Tennyson are familiar with one variant, in the tale of Gareth and Lynette, where Gareth, the valiant kitchen-knave,

[1] The date is uncertain, but the first portion must have been written before 1911.

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appears as such a novice, and is schooled by the opprobrious Lynette, whose patrician scorn yields at last to the prowess and forbearing respect of her esquire. Gareth says, but the complaint might have been put more appropriately in the mouth of Perceval :

"I that know,
Have strength and wit, in my good mother's hall
Linger with vacillating obedience,
Prison'd and kept and coax'd and whistled to—
Since the good mother holds me still a child !
Good mother is bad mother unto me !"

Take first the Mabinogi of Peredur. Earl Evrawc and his six sons having been slain in wars and encounters, his widow brings up their sole surviving boy in a solitary place, where she hopes he will never hear of chivalry or be tempted to carry arms.

And one day they [Peredur and his mother] saw three knights coming along the horse-road on the borders of the forest. And the three knights were Gwalchmai the son of Gwyar, and Geneir Gwystyl, and Owain the son of Urien. And Owain kept on the track of the knight who had divided the apples in Arthur's Court, whom they were in pursuit of. "Mother," said Peredur, "what are those yonder ?" "They are angels, my son," said she. "By my faith," said Peredur, "I will go and become an angel with them." And Peredur went to the road, and met them. "Tell me, good soul," said Owain, "sawest thou a knight pass this way, either to-day or yesterday ?" "I know not," answered he, "what a knight is." "Such an one as I am," said Owain. "If thou wilt tell me what I ask thee, I will tell thee that which thou askest me." "Gladly will I do so," replied Owain. "What is this ?" demanded Peredur, concerning the saddle. "It is a saddle," said Owain. Then he asked about all the accoutrements which he saw upon the men, and the horses, and the arms, and what they were for, and how they were used. And Owain showed him all these things fully, and told him what use was made of them. "Go forward," said Peredur, "for I saw such an one as thou inquirest for, and I will follow thee."

Then Peredur returned to his mother and her company, and he said to her : "Mother, those were not angels, but honourable knights." Then his mother swooned away.[1]

[1] *Mabinogion*, "Peredur, the son of Evrawc."

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Chrétien's version, with its sense of natural beauty and its vivacious dialogue, sounds a good deal more modern, at any rate in Chrétien's flowing rhymes :

So he goes into the forest ; and now the heart in his breast rejoices at the sweet season, and at the songs which he hears of the birds making merry : all these things made him glad. And as the weather was so mild and serene, he gave his horse free rein, and let him go browsing on the fresh green herbage ; and, being skilled in throwing, he cast round about him as he went the javelins that he had, now in front and now to the rear, first high, then low, until he heard amid the woodland five armed knights approaching, equipped in their panoply, and the arms of those who came made a very great noise, for the boughs of the oaks and hornbeams struck their armour often, and all the hauberks rattled and the lances hammered on the shields.

. . . . . .

And when he saw them in the open as they came out of the wood, and beheld the gleaming shields and the clear and shining hauberks, and the lances and the shields, which he had never seen before ; and when he saw the green and vermilion glisten in the sun, and the or and the azure and the argent, it seemed to him very fine and very fair, and he said : " Ha, Lord God, I thank thee ! these that I see here are angels."

. . . . . .

Now he threw himself to the ground and said his creed right through, and such prayers as he knew, which his mother had taught him. And the leader of the knights sees him and says : " Stand back, for yonder peasant has fallen to the earth with fright at seeing us ; if we go towards him all together methinks there is great fear lest he swoon away, and then he would not be able to answer anything that I ask him." So they stop, and he goes towards the youth a good pace, greeting and reassuring him. " Youth," says he, " have no fear." " I have none," says the youth, " by the Saviour in whom I trust ! Are you not God ? " " Nay, in faith ! " " What are you then ? " " I am a knight." " I have never known a knight. I have never heard tell of such a thing," said the youth, " nor have I seen one. But you are more beautiful than God ; would that I were as splendid and made like you ! " At this word the knight has drawn nigh to him, and asks him : " Have you seen to-day in this laund five knights and three damsels ? " But the youth asks him other things, questioning and waiting his reply. He stretches out his hand and takes the lance,

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and asks: "Fair my lord, you that have the name of knight, what is this thing that you hold?" "I am fairly hit, it seems to me," says the knight. "I thought, fair sweet sir, to learn things from thee, and thou wantest to hear them of me. I will tell you; it is my lance." "Say you," says he, "that they throw it as I do with my javelins?" "No, no, young man, thou art altogether foolish; rather they strike with it close at hand." "Then the one of these three javelins which you see here is better worth, for, whatsoever I want, I kill with it birds and beasts at need, and I slay them from as far off as one could shoot a quarrel." "Youth, with that I have no concern; but answer me about the knights; tell me if you know whither they have gone, and whether you have seen any damsels." [1]

Perceval still counters every question of the knight with a further question, in a way that illustrates the strokes of humour occasionally lightening Chrétien's narrative. There is life in the scene, and some sense of individual character; compared with this the romances of adventure, not excluding most of Chrétien's own, too often have an unreal and attenuated air.

In the prose romance of *Perceval le Gallois*, sometimes known as *Perlesvaus*, in which the sacramental character of the legend is accentuated, this episode is related differently. The following is from the felicitous rendering of the mediæval prose by Sebastian Evans:

When that the father had thus spoken to the lad, they returned together to the castle. When the morrow morning came, the lad [Perceval] arose and heard the birds sing and bethought him that he would go for disport into the forest for the day sith it was fair. So he mounted on one of his father's horses of the chase and carried his javelins Welshman-fashion and went into the forest and found a stag and followed him a good four leagues Welsh, until he came into a launde and found two knights all armed that were there doing battle, and the one had a red shield and the other a white. He gave up tracking the stag to look on at the mally and saw that the Red Knight was conquering the White. He launched one of his javelins at the Red Knight so hard that he pierced his habergeon and made it pass through the heart. The knight fell dead. Sir, saith the damsel [who is telling the whole story], the knight of the white shield made great joy thereof, and the lad asked him were knights so easy to slay? "Methought," saith the lad, "that

[1] *Perceval le Gallois*, ed. Potvin, ii., ll. 1299-1424; for text see Appendix D to this chapter.

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none might never pierce nor damage a knight's armour, otherwise would I not have run him through with my javelin," saith the lad. Sir, the lad brought the destrier home to his father and mother, and right grieved were they when they heard the tidings of the knight he had slain. And right were they, for thereof did sore trouble come to them hereafter. Sir, the squire departed from the house of his father and mother and came to the Court of King Arthur.[1]

The Breton lay of *Tyolet*, doubtless based on a folk-tale, recites still another version of the *enfances* of a hero like Perceval. Here the son of the widowed lady pursues a stag which is suddenly transformed into a "knight-beast." Struck with admiration, Tyolet persuades his reluctant mother to give him his father's arms, arrayed in which he fares to Arthur's Court, and covers himself with glory in a daring exploit—that of the white stag guarded by seven lions. As such episodes from older lays became attached to the more illustrious heroes their original heritors were forgotten.

Chrétien did more than any other writer to make Arthurian story cosmopolitan. Hitherto it had been the theme of ethnic legends. Now it became the common property of European literature, and poets and romancers of all countries were at liberty to handle it according to the dictates of their genius. Much of the mythic grandeur had vanished; but the stories had been brought into some relation with the actual world, personal interests had been imparted, and intelligible motives supplied to cover the riddles and paradoxes of the primitive tales. Characterisation made an advance in Chrétien's work, although he was chiefly interested in anatomising, not without sophistry, the moods and motives common to most men and women. In Erec, Lancelot, Cligès, Soredamours, Guenevere, Yvain, Laudine, Keu or Kay, and Laudine's tricksy damsel Lunette, he produced some distinct and well-finished types of human nature. To us his fine shades of sentiment may seem tiresome: and the ideality prescribed by canons of mediæval art is often too abstract, resulting in characters altogether too vague and general. That his stories had nothing in

[1] *The High History of the Holy Graal* (Temple ed.), i. 32-33. The original is printed in the first volume of Potvin's edition of the *Conte del Graal*, where Potvin accepts the date of this romance as about 1200. It claims to have been translated into French from an original written in Latin by Joseph of Arimathea, the scribe using a MS. almost illegible with age. Potvin would place this Latin version at about a hundred years earlier, but this was unquestionably a comparatively late story.

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the least akin to the tense drama of the northern sagas and the Niblung legends, to the martial spirit of the *chansons de geste*, or to the intoxicating passion of the tale of Tristan and Iseult, was no impediment to the triumph of a style of romance which faithfully mirrored the mind and temper of its age.

"Le Bel Inconnu" of Renaud de Beaujeu

Chrétien may reasonably be regarded as the chief of a school of novelists. His closest imitator was Renaud de Beaujeu, who in *Le Bel Inconnu*, the story of Giglain the son of Gawain, plagiarised shamelessly from his master's *Érec*, copying the very phraseology and reproducing whole passages with little disguise beyond changing the rhyming words. Renaud's poem is worth noticing, as an extreme example of the fashion in which a clever craftsman, eager to supply the market with novelties, would appropriate miscellaneous folk-tales from Breton and Welsh sources, and matter used more legitimately by his rivals, to eke out a promising subject. If the English author of *Libeaus Desconus* (*c.* 1350) is to be trusted, his source and Renaud's was a French poem that has disappeared.[1] *Libeaus Desconus* is a much ruder work, and though not so simple as the English lays of *Orfeo*, *Sir Launfal*, and *Emare*, is an ingenuous recital of astonishing feats and sensational enchantments that would please an audience not over-fastidious. In many of its details it corresponds to "Peredur," and in others to the Tyolet myth. There are points of likeness also between Renaud's version and the seventh book of Malory, which must have been indebted to some form of the same story. But Renaud took great freedoms with his plot, curtailing the *enfances* of his hero, and inventing a long episode, amounting to nearly half the poem, in which Giglain returns to his fairy Calypso. He declared himself ready to relate as much more if his readers liked it.

The adventures are ushered in with the usual formalities. A damsel comes to Arthur's Court seeking a champion to deliver her mistress, in the toils of enchantment. A short space before, a young knight had presented himself, and being asked his name replied that he knew none other than "Beaufils," which his mother had

[1] See W. H. Schofield (*Harvard Studies*, iv.). The theory that there was a French original (*c.* 1190), which also gave rise to Italian and German versions, is that of Gaston Paris, but is contested by Kaluza. The parallels with "Peredur," and the proofs of Renaud's thefts from *Érec*, are fully set out by Professor Schofield.

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called him. Arthur accordingly gives him the name of the Fair Unknown. This is the champion whom the damsel, much to her chagrin, obtains in answer to her appeal. Treating her knight with disdain, as Malory and Tennyson's Lynette treats Gareth, she suffers him to convoy her on the journey home, and they depart accompanied by a dwarf. They arrive at the Ford Perilous, where the Fair Unknown shows his prowess by overthrowing a hostile knight; and then, by slaying two giants who were maltreating a lady, he compels the haughty damsel to eat her scornful gibes. Now ensues a round of dazzling adventures, as highly coloured as anything in mediæval romance. The young knight meets the traditional enchantress, who in a sensuous scene tempts him to dally in her bower; but he presently slips out of her toils, in a manner peculiarly ungallant, which, in the sequel, fills him with remorse.

After braving the perils of the Desolate City, he fights his way into an enchanted castle, and there frees the object of his quest, La Blonde Esmerée, a king's daughter, imprisoned in the form of a serpent. With a kiss, *le fier baiser*, undauntedly bestowed upon this hideous shape, he destroys the spell. The rescued princess reveals to the nameless knight that he is Giglain, son of the redoubtable Gawain. Willingly will she go with her deliverer to Arthur's Court, and there give him her hand. But the romancer depicts his hero in the throes of passion and regret for the fay whom he so basely deserted, seizing the opportunity for sentimental rhapsody in the style affected by Chrétien and his fellow-craftsmen. Renaud wrote his poem to please his mistress, whom he identifies with the lovely enchantress, and he puts his own hopes and fears in the mental torments of Giglain. Upon the episode of his hero's return to the fay of the Golden Isle the poet exhausts his resources in voluptuous description and emotional rhetoric. This second visit to the palace of his Calypso is obviously a pretext for prolonging the tale. Roused at length from ignoble pleasures, Giglain returns to the Court of Arthur, where the princess anxiously awaits him.

In both the English lay and the more elaborate fabling of Renaud, the scene where the hero achieves the lady's rescue must have thrilled uncritical readers. He rides through the Desolate City and enters a gigantic hall, where a host of uncanny minstrels [1]

[1] See Renaud and the English poem, Appendix E to this chapter.

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greet him with a concert of every conceivable instrument. In sore dismay, he stands firm in the middle of the hall and awaits the adventure. An armed knight issues from an obscure chamber and joins battle with the intruder. He is put to flight. Then darkness fills the palace, till one of the strange musicians relights the tapers set about the walls and floor and windows, and the diabolic minstrelsy strikes up again. Then begins a tremendous duel with a grim chevalier mounted on a horned steed whose nostrils vomit flame. Again there is darkness, and the vast building resounds with infernal noises, in the midst of which the Wivre comes forth and bows humbly before the victorious knight, fascinating him with her regard. The horrible spectre kisses him on the mouth. It is the *fier baiser*, and a celestial voice proclaims that the adventure is accomplished, he has released the spell-bound princess. Such were the nondescript inventions in which the more irresponsible romancers abounded. More to our purpose is the following example of Renaud's sentimental volubility. The love-sick knight is heard soliloquising.

Love has him well under dominion, so that he can neither eat nor sleep. Truly he has come to an evil port. Love tortures and arraigns him, bends him in all to his will. In his mind he cannot think how to have speech of her. Day and night he complains of that which torments him ; Love will not let him rest ; all his heart turns to moodiness ; he ceases to eat or sleep. Love holds him at his will. Much did Giglain suffer as he lay in his bed. At no hour can he remit his pangs ; he well believes that he must die. He trembles, shivers, groans, and sighs : cruel indeed are his torments ; he turns and turns again, and then stretches him out, and often throws himself prostrate. He has in him the signs of Love, and verily he finds Love an evil foe.[1]

[1] Bien l'a amors en sa saisine,
Qu'il ne mangüe, ne ne dort.
Trop est arivés à mal port.
Amors le destraint et justise,
Del tot le met à sa devise ;
N'en son consel ne puet trover
Comment il puist a li parler.
De ço que ensi les destraint
Et nuit et jor por li se plaint,
Amors ne l'laisse reposer ;
Tot son cuer atorne à penser ;
Le mangier laisse et le dormir ;
Amors le maine à son plaisir.
Moult par fu Giglains angoissiés,
Ens en son lit estoit coucies.
. . . .
Nule hore ne pot hors issir
Bien cuide qu'il doie morir ;
Tranble, fremist, gemist, souspire ;
Moult par soufre cruel martire,
Torne, retorne et, puis s'estent
Et adens se remet souvent.
En soi a d'amors le maniere,
Moult le trove male guerriere.

(*Le Bel Inconnu*, publié par C. Hippeau, Paris, 1860, ll. 4091-4113.)

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Renaud shows something of the psychological method of a modern novelist in such a diagnosis of sexual emotions; but he insists too much, and the shallowness of Giglain's passion is laid bare when, at the summons back to the world of chivalry and renown, he jilts his fairy love. None of the sentimental poets, with all their idealisations of knightly courtship and lofty feminine condescension, came anywhere near the tragic intensity of the Tristan poems or the simple truth of the Breton lays. But the romantic matter was now ripe for the next stage of development, the fusion of the separate stories into a comprehensive cycle, and the introduction of new motives in the sacramental history of the Grail.

APPENDIX A

El reaume ne an l'anpire
N'ot dame de tant buenes mors;
Mes tant l'ama Erec d'amors
Que d'armes mes ne li chaloit.
Ne a tornoiemant n'aloit:
N'avoit mes soing de tornoiier;
A sa fame aloit desnoiier.
De li fist s'amie et sa drue.
Tot mist son cuer et s'antandue
An li acoler et beisier;
Ne se queroit d'el aeisier
Si compaignon duel en avoient,
Antr'aus sovant se demantoient
De ce que trop l'amoit assez.
. . . . . .
Tant fu blasmez de totes janz,
De chevaliers et de serjanz,
Qu'Enide l'oï antredire
Que recreant aloit ses sire
D'armes et de chevalerie;
Mout avoit changiee sa vie.
De ceste chose li pesa,
Mes sanblant feire n'an osa;
Car ses sire an mal le preïst
Assez tost, s'ele li deïst!

Mais ne plus ne moins que le soleil trespasse en clarte la grant resplendisseur de la lune et des estoilles, pareillement Enide trespassoit les biaultes de toutes les plus aduenans dames et damoiselles qui autour d'elle conuenoient. En ce chasteau elle fu gouuernee long tamps auec son tresame seigneur et mari qui d'elle s'enamoura tant parfaictement, qu'il estoit tousiours en sa compaignie, et de toute son entente se penoit pour le servir doubter et amer. Ne Erec jamais n'aloit a la chasse au gibier ne ailleurs que Enide ne fust tousiours auec luy. Chastement se continst Enide auec son mari Erec et combien que plusieurs aguetemens fussent par ennemis sur elle il n'y eust oncques engin d'homme ne de femme tant sceut de mal pencer qui sur elle trouuast vne

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Tant li fu la chose celee
Qu'il avint une matinee
La ou il jurent an un lit,
Ou orent eü maint delit.
Boche a boche antre braz gisoient
Come cil qui mout s'antramoient.
Cil dormi, et cele vella.
De la parole li manbra,
Que disoient de son seignor
Par la contree li pluisor.
Quant il l'an pris a sovenir,
De plorer ne se pot tenir.
Tel duel an ot et tel pesance
Qu'il li avint par mescheance
Que ele dist une parole
Don ele se tint puis por fole ;
Mes ele n'i pensoit nul mal.
Son seignor a mont et a val
Comança tant a regarder,
Le cors bien fet et le vis cler,
Et plore de si grant ravine
Que chieent dessor la peitrine
Son seignor les lermes de li,
Et dist : " Lasse, con mar m'esmui,
De mon païs ! Que ving ça querre ?
Bien me devroit sorbir la terre,
Quant toz li miaudre chevaliers,
Li plus hardiz et li plus fiers,
Li plus frans et li plus cortois,
Que onques fust ne cuens ne rois,
A del tot an tot relanquie
Por moi tote cheualerie.
Donques l'ai je honi por voir ;
Nel vossisse por nul avoir."
Lors li a dit : " Con mar i fus ! "
A tant se test, si ne dist plus.
Erec ne dormi pas formant,
Si l'a tresoï an dormant.
De la parole s'esvalla

tasche de laidure. Car d'estre bonne saige deuotte sobre large ammonniere cremant dieu et bien gardant son honneur elle passoit toutes autres princesses. Et ausi nature ne eust james mis son entente a former vng tant soubtil ouurage s'elle ne eust eu vertu diuine qui luy eust aidie, a la composer de matere non corupte a pechie ne mallice, dont Erec en fu tant affolle en amours qu'il ne lui souuint oncques puis de porter armes jouster ne tournoier, par quoi vng grant mal sourdi pour Enide comme cy apres sera dit.

Les cheualiers du royaulme voians Erec entierement delaissier le noble mestier d'armes pour l'entretenement de l'amour de sa femme sans laquelle il ne pouoit viure ne durer ils en furent moult desplaisans et de ceste vraie amour murmurerent disans qu'il estoit trop feru en enfance et que ce ne luy estoit pas honneur de laissier l'exercice de la cheualerie pour ses baisiers et acolers qu'il prendoit de jour en jour en s'amie et sa dame. Toutes uoies nul ne lui en osoit rien dire si s'en deuisoient aux dames et des dames ce vint a la congnoissance de Enide qui mie n'en fu joieuse. Elle doubtoit que se elle en aduertissoit son seigneur qu'il ne se courroucast a elle. Et pour ce a grant mesaise elle portoit en son cuer ces parolles toucans l'onneur de son ami. Conclusions elle qui ne vouloit auoir blasme ne villonnie vne

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Et de ce mout se mervella
Que si formant plorer la vit,
Si li a demandé et dit :
" Dites moi, bele amie chiere,
Por quoi plorez an tel meniere ?
De quoi avez ire ne duel ?
Certes je le savrai mon vuel.
Dites le moi, ma douce amie,
Et gardez, nel me celez mie,
Por quoi avez dit que mar fui.
Por moi fu dit, non por autrui.
Bien ai la parole antandue."
Lors fu mout Enide esperdue,
Grant peor ot et grant esmai !
" Sire," fet ele, " je ne sai
Neant de quan que vos me dites."
" Dame, por quoi ves escondites ?
Li celers ne vos ï vaut rien.
Ploré avez, ce voi je bien ;
Por neant ne plorez vos mie,—
Et an dormant ai je oïe
La parole que vos deistes."
" Ha ! biaus sire, onques ne l'oïstes
Mes je cuit bien que ce fu songes."
" Or me servez vos de mançonges,
Apertemant vos oï mantir.
Mes tart vendroiz au repantir,
Se voir ne me reconoissiez."
" Sire, quant vos si angoissiez,
La verité vos an dirai.
Ja plus ne le vos celerai ;
Mes je criem bien ne vos enuit,
Par ceste terre dient tuit,
Li noir et li blont et li ros,
Que granz domages est de vos
Que vos armes antreleissiez ;
Vostre pris an est abeissiez.
Tuit soloient dire l'autre an
Qu'an tot le mont ne savoit l'an

nuyt entre les aultres pensant ad ce propols se prinst a plorer d'encoste son mari qui oyant les sangloux et soupirs de sa tresamee il s'esuilla et l'interroga pour sauoir la cause de ces pleurs. Enide dist qu'elle ne plouroit pas, mes elle ne sceut trouuer tant de moiens qu'il ne conuint apres la coniuration de son seigneur qu'elle congnust la verite. Si lui dist : Ha sire, pardonnes moy se je vous dy chose qui plesante ne vous soit. Sur mon ame, toux les cheualiers et barons de ce roiaulme ne cessent je piec'a de murmurer contre moy et dire que je vous gaste et qu'il tient a moy que voux n'exerces plus le nobe stille d'armes dont ceste imposicion deshonnourable forment me griefue au cuer et n'est pas sans cause, car ils dient communement que je vous retien qu'il ne tient qu'a moy que vous ne cherchies vostre aduenture de jouster et tournoier ausi bien que vous fistes oncques et de ce m'en raporte je a dieu, car j'ameroie mieux estre morte qu'estre cause du retardement de vostre honneur et proffit. A ces parolles ne dist mot Erec si non qu'il delibera en soi d'esprouuer se Enide sa feme l'amoit bien lealment, mais je ne di pas que souspecon et jallousie fut cause de ceste deliberacion. Il est moult pencif et a Enide commande qu'elle s'atourne pour tirer en voie et lui dist qu'il s'en ira en sa compaignie seulement par le pays

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Mellor chevalier ne plus preu,
Vostre parauz n'estoit nul leu.
Or se vont tuit de vos gabant,
Vieil et juene, petit et grant ;
Recreant vos apelent tuit.
Cuidiez vos donc qu'il ne
m'enuit,
Quant j'oi dire de vos despit ?
Mout me poise quant l'an le dit ;
Et por ce m'an poise ancor plus
Qu'il m'an metent le blasme sus ;
Blasmee an sui, ce poise moi,—
Et dient tuit reison por quoi,
Que si vos ai lacié et pris
Que toz an perdez vostre pris,
Ne me querez a el [1] antandre.

. . . . .

Tel pesance or androit an oi,
Que garde prandre ne m'an soi,
Tant que je dis que mar i fustes."
" Dame," fet il, " droit an eüstes.
Et cil qui m'an blasment ont droit.
Aparelliez vos or androit ;
Por chevauchier vos aprestez.
Levez de ci, si vos vestez
De vostre robe la plus bele,
Et feites metre vostre sele
Sor vostre mellor palefroi."
Or est Enide an grant effroi ;
Mout se lieve triste et pansive,
A li sole tance et estrive
De la folie qu'ele dist ;
Tant grate chievre que mal gist.
" Ha ! " fet ele, " sole mauveise!
Or estoie je trop a eise ;
Qu'il ne me faloit nule chose.
Deus, et por quoi sui je tant ose
Que tel forsenage osai dire ?
Deus ! don ne m'amoit trop mes
sire ?
An foi, lasse, trop m'amoit il." [2]

pour aprendre le mestier d'armes, a quoi n'osa rien respondre Enide, mais elle fust moult dolante. Erec se leua et s'en alla faire ses apprestes et Enide demoura en sa chambre plorant et disant en ceste maniere.

Hellas meschante chetiue ! qu'ay je fait qui ay mis monseigneur qui tant m'amoit en vne anuyeuse entreprise. Lasse, veci bien grant infortune. dieux que pourrai je deuenir.[3]

[1] *Var.* aillors.
[2] *Érec und Énide*, ed. W. Förster, Halle, 1809. ll. 2432-2595.
[3] From the prose *remariement*, *ibid.* pp. 268-269.

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APPENDIX B

Granz est la complainte Alixandre,
Mès cele ne rest mie mandre,
Que la dameisele demainne
Tote nuit est an si grant painne
Qu'ele ne dort ne ne repose :
Amors li a el cors anclose
Une tançon et une rage
Qui mout li troble son corage,
Et qui si l'angoisse et destraint
Que tote nuit plore et se plaint
Et se degète et si tressaut
A po que li cuers ne li faut
Et quant ele a tant travaillié
Et sangloti et baaillié,
Et tressailli et sospiré,
Lors a an son cuer remiré
Qui cil estoit et de queus mors,
Por cui la destraignoit Amors.

. . . . .

Et dit : "Fole ! qu'ai je a feire,
Se cist vaslez est deboneire
Et sages et cortois et preuz ?
Tot ce li est enors et preuz.
Et de sa biauté moi que chaut ?"

. . . . .

Et sui je donc por ce s'amie ?
Nenil, ne qu'a un autre sui,
Por quoi pans je donc plus à lui,
Se plus d'un autre ne m'agrée ?
Ne sai : tote an sui esgarée ;
Car onques meis ne pansai tant
A nul home el siecle vivant,
Et, mon vuel, toz jorz le verroie
Ja mes iauz partir n'an querroie :
Tant m'abelist, quant je le voi,
Est ce amors ? Oil, ce croi.[1]

[1] *Cligès*, ed. W. Förster, Halle, 1884, ll. 873-926.

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APPENDIX C

Quant le lion delivré ot,
Cuida qu'a lui le covenist
Combatre et que sor lui venist ;
Mès il ne le se pansa onques.
Oez que fist li lions donques.
Il fist que frans et deboneire,
Que il li comança a feire
Sanblant que a lui se randoit,
Et ses piez joinz li estandoit
Et vers terre anclina sa chiere,
S'estut sor les deus piez derriere,
Et puis si se ragenoilloit
At tote sa face moilloit
De lermes par humilité.
Mes sire Yvains par verité
Set que li lions l'an mercie,
Et que devant lui s'umilie,
Por le serpant qu'il avait mort
Et lui delivré de la mort :
Si li plest mout ceste avanture.[1]

APPENDIX D

Ensi en la foriest en entre,
Et maintenant li cuers del ventre
Por le douc tans se resjooit,
Et por les cans que il ooit
Des oisiaus qui joie faisoent ;
Toutes ces coses li plaisoient.
Por le douçor del tans sierain,
Osta son caceöur son frain,
Si le laissa aler paissant
Par l'erbe fresce verdoiant ;
Et il ki bien lancier savoit,
De gaverlos que il avoit,
Aloit environ lui lançant,
Une eure arriere, l'autre avant,
Une eure bas et l'autre haut,
Tant qu'il oï parmi le gaut
Venir .V. chevaliers armes
De toutes armes acesmes,

[1] *Yvain*, ed. W. Förster, Halle, 1887, ll. 3388-3407.

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Et moult grant noise demenoient
Les armes de ciaus qui venoient,
Car sovent hurtoient as armes
Li rain des kesnes et des carmes,
Et tuit li hauberc freteloient,
Les lances as escus hurtoient.
. . . Et, quant il les vit en apert
Que del bos furent descovert,
Et vit les escus formoians,
Et les haubiers clers et luisans ;
Et les lances et les escus
Que onques mais n'avoit veüs,
Et vit le vert et le vermel
Reluire contre le solel,
Et l'or et l'asur et l'argent,
Si li fu moult biel et moult gent.
Et dist : " Ha ! sire Dex, merchi !
Ce sont angle que je voi ci ! "
. . . Maintenant vers tere se lance
Et dist trestoute sa creance
Et orisons que il savoit,
Que sa mere apris li avoit ;
Et li maistres des chevaliers
Le voit et dist : " Estes arriers ;
K'a tiere est de paor, keüs
Cis vassaus ki nos a veüs ;
Se nos aliemes tot ensamble
Vers lui, il aroit, ce me samble,
Grant paour ke ja n'i faurroit,
Ja respondre ne nous poroit
A riens ke jou li demandasce."
Cil s'arriestent et il s'en passe
Vers le vallet, grant aleüre ;
Si le salue et asseüre :
" Vallet," fait il, " n'aies paor."
" Non ai-ge, par le sauveör,"
Fait li valles, " en qui je croi !
N'iestes vous Dex ? " " Naie, par foi."
" Qui estes dont ? " " Chevaliers sui ! "
" Ains mais chevalier ne connui
N'onques mais parler n'en oï,"
Fait li valles, " ne nul n'en vi ;
Mais vous estes plus biaus ke Dex ;
Car fusce-jou ore autreteus,

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Ausi Luisans et ausi fais !"
A cest mot, s'est pres de lui trais
Li chevaliers, si li demande :
"Veïs-tu hui, par ceste lande,
.V. chevaliers et .III. pucieles ?"
Li valles a autres noveles
Enquiert et demande et entent :
A sa lance sa main li tent,
Sel prent et dist : "Biaus sire ciers,
Vous ki aves nom chevaliers,
Que est içou que vous tenes ?"
"Or sui-je moult bien assenes,"
Fait li cevaliers, "ce m'est vis ;
Je quidoie, biaus dous amis,
Noveles aprendre de toi
Et tu les vins oïr de moi.
Jel te dirai : ce est ma lance."
"Dites-vous," fait-il, "c'on en lance
Si com fac de mes gaverlos ?"
"Nenil, vallet, tu ies tous sos ;
Ains en fiert-on tout demanois."
"Dont vault mius li .I. de ces trois
Gaverlos que vous vees chi ;
Car, kanke jou voel, en ochi
Oisiaus et biestes au besoing,
Et si les ocis de si loing
Que on poroit .I. boujon traire."
"Vallet, de chou n'ai-jou ke faire ;
Mais des chevaliers me respont,
Dy-moi se tu ses u il vont,
E des pucieles veïs-tu ?" [1]

APPENDIX E

Il s'envait adiès la grant rue,
Regardant adiès les grans rues
Dont les fenestres sont marbrues.
Chaet en sont tot li piler
Il ne se vaut mie arester,
Tant qu'à la sale en est venus,
U les jogléors a veus,
Sor les fenestres tot asis,
Devant cascuns i cierge espris,

To the castell he rod,
And hovede and abod,[2]
To Jhesu bad [3] and tolde,
To sende hym tyndynge glad
Of ham that longe had
That lady yn prysoun holde.

Syr lybeaus knyght certys
Rod ynto the palys,

[1] *Perceval*, ii., ll. 1299-1424.
[2] Paused and waited.
[3] Prayed.

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Et son estrument retenoit
Cascuns, ital con il l'avoit.
L'un voit as fenestres harper,
L'autre delès celui roter,
L'un estive, l'autre viële,
Li autres gigle et calimèle,
Et cante cler comme seraine,
Li autres la citole maine,
Li uns entendoit au corner,
Et l'autres au bien flahuter ;
Li un notoient lai d'amor ;
Sonnent timbre, sonnent tabor ;
Muses, saltères et frétel,
Et buissines et moïnel,
Cascons ovre de son mestier.
Et quant voient le chevalier
Venu sor son destrier armé,
A hautes vos sont escrie :
"Dius saut, Dius saut le chevalier,
Qui est venus la dame aidier,
De la maisnie Artur le roi."
Adont fu il en grant effroi ;
Et ne por quant si lor respont :
"Cil dames Dius, qui fist le mont
Vos doinst à tos mal aventure,"
Outre s'en va grant aléure,
Parmi la sale cevauçant
Que de rien ne s'en va targant.
. .
Li Bias Desconneus laiens
En mi la sale s'aresta—
Et à sa lance s'apuia
Ileuc atendoit s'aventure.[1]

And at the halle alyghte,
Trompes, schalmuses,[2]
He seygh be for the hyegh deys[3]
Stonde yn hys syghte.

Amydde the halle flore,
A fire stark and store[4]
Was lyght and brende bryght,
Nere the dore he yede,
And ladde yn hys stede,
That wont was helpe hym yn fyght.

Lybeauus inner gan pace,
To se ech a place,
The hales yn the halle,
Of mayne[5] mor ne lasse
Ne sawe he body, ne face ;
But menstrales yclodeth[6] yn palle.

With harp, fydele, and rote[7]
Orgenes, and mery note,
Well mery they maden alle,
Wyth sytole,[8] an sawtrye,
So moch melodye
Was neuer wythinne walle.

Before ech menstrale stod
A torche fayre and good,
Brennynge fayre and bryght ;
Inner more he yode,[9]
To wyte wyth egre mode,
Ho scholde with hym fyghte.[10]

[Soon he entered the main passage, looking along the chief corridors, the windows of which were of marble. All the pillars

[1] *Le Bel Inconnu*, publié par C. Hippeau, Paris, 1860, ll. 2852-2901. The English poem is printed in the same volume.
[2] Psalteries. [3] High dais, or table. [4] Stark and strong.
[5] Meinie, company. [6] Yclothed. [7] Kind of fiddle.
[8] Citole, a musical instrument. [9] Went.
[10] From the English poem, ll. 1753-1788, in Joseph Ritson's *Ancient English Metrical Romances*, revised by E. Goldsmid, 1885, pp. 88-89.

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had fallen, but he may not stop till he has come to the hall where he saw the minstrels all seated at the windows. Before each was a lighted taper, and each held his appointed instrument. He sees at a window one harping, and the next playing on the rote ; one has a flute, another a viol ; the one fiddles, the other pipes, and sings clear as a siren. Some manage the timbrel, others he hears sounding the horn, and others again play sweetly on the flute. Some intone a love-song. Timbrel and tabor, bagpipes, psalteries and trumpets, and divers instruments resound : each performs his part. And when they see the knight come on his armed steed they cry with a loud voice : " God save the knight who comes from Arthur's train to deliver the lady ! " Then was he sore dismayed, but nevertheless he answered them : " May the Lord God Who made the world confound you all ! " He goes onward at a good pace riding through the hall, pausing for nought that may betide. . . .

The Fair Unknown stopped there in the middle of the hall and rested on his lance. There he awaited his adventure.]

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CHAPTER VI

ARTHURIAN PROSE ROMANCE—MALORY

Robert de Borron

A PROFOUND change came over Arthurian romance in the prose versions produced during the next two centuries. Probably in the last two decades of the twelfth century, a poet calling himself Robert de Borron planned a trilogy in which the story of the Holy Grail was to be amalgamated with the Matter of Britain. Who or what Borron was is a riddle. He has been generally taken to have been an Anglo-Norman knight, writing during the reign of Henry II.; but Dr Sommer thinks he was a Frenchman who wrote under a pseudonym, like his imaginary relative, Hélie de Borron, and Luces de Gast, who were responsible for the prose *Tristan* and other parts of the vulgate cycle. Of Robert de Borron's poems[1] the first and second parts alone, *Joseph d'Arimathie* and *Merlin*, appear to have been written; at any rate, these are all that have survived, and that in a mutilated condition. They were soon cast into prose, altered and rearranged by the transcribers and enormously extended. The missing third part is supposed by some critics to be represented, in a much abridged and altered condition, by the story known as the "Didot" *Perceval*, after a former owner of the manuscript, and in an abridged yet considerably more complete form in the Modena manuscript edited by Miss Jessie L. Weston.[2] Dr Sommer denies, however, that the "Didot" *Perceval* is Borron's or anything like what he intended to write.[3] Borron was a rude and inferior sort of poet, and the interest of his work is less literary than historical; it would perhaps never have been preserved but for its usefulness as an early history prefixed to the vulgate romances.

Borron's three poems would presumably have formed a

[1] Introduction to *Vulgate Versions*, x.-xi.
[2] Printed in *The Legend of Sir Perceval* (1909, Grimm Library), ii. 9-112.
[3] Introduction to *Vulgate Versions*, xi.; *cp.* Miss Weston's *Legend of Sir Perceval*, 338-344.

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complete cycle, dealing with the epiphany, the transmission from keeper to keeper, and the final assumption of the Grail. *Joseph d'Arimathie* gives the early adventures of the venerable relic, opening with an account of the Redemption, and relating how Joseph used the precious chalice to receive the blood of the Saviour, Who appeared to him and directed that the Grail should be carried to Britain, and also gave instructions touching the rites of the Sacrament. The solemnity of this induction is maintained throughout, with a profusion of symbolism illustrating the virtue of purity, the inscrutable nature of the Trinity and the attainment of communion with God. In the *Merlin*, the famous British enchanter, whose vaticinations Geoffrey of Monmouth had recited in a semi-metrical rhapsody, is brought into the Christianised cycle as the son of an innocent damsel and a demon, through whom the enemies of mankind had plotted to enslave the human race. But the innocence of the mother prevails against the infernal machinations, and Merlin, by divine grace, wields his powers for good. Both poems are definitely localised in Britain. The *Joseph* is figuratively an august account of the conversion of this country, which is thus regarded as an original seat of the Christian Church and not an offshoot nourished from Rome. Glastonbury Abbey is celebrated as a place of peculiar holiness ; not merely as the home of the most venerated Christian relics, but also as the burial-place of Arthur and Guenevere, whose tomb was alleged to have been discovered there in the reign of Richard Cœur-de-Lion (1191).[1] This was a blow to the national sentiment of the Welsh, who believed that Arthur was not dead but would return to save them from bondage, and highly satisfactory to the Angevin monarch, whose dynasty was adroitly glorified by the new version of Arthurian history.

Borron's trilogy

There are three marked stages in the process by which the stories of Arthur and of the Grail were co-ordinated into one comprehensive cycle. First of all Borron's *Joseph* and *Merlin* were converted into prose and linked up with the standard version of the history of Arthur in French prose, known as *Le Livre d'Artus*.[2] Into this third portion had been introduced a version of the Grail

Formation of the cycle

[1] See Fletcher, pp. 189-190, on the account by Giraldus Cambrensis of this discovery.

[2] H. O. Sommer, *The Structure of le Livre d'Artus* (1914), p. 44.

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quest, having Perceval as the protagonist. The compilers excised what parts of the *Livre d'Artus* were already represented in the *Merlin*, but failed to remove various inconsistencies and contradictions. This attempt to complete in prose the trilogy that Robert de Borron had designed to write in verse prompted some other French writer, according to Dr Sommer, to try to complete Borron's work by adding to it the branch known as the "Didot" *Perceval*.

The next stage in the formation of the cycle was the interpolation of the prose *Lancelot* before the story of the quest, with some modifications and adjustments of other parts, and final revision of the last book, the *Mort Artus*. This unwieldy compilation, the prose *Lancelot*, which used to be attributed to Walter Map, but was probably the work of an anonymous French writer "who posed as Gautier Map, the archdeacon of Oxford," [1] is not only a history of the career of Lancelot, but also comprises the adventures of Gawain and other knights, together with the love story of Guenevere and the eponymous hero, and all the tragic events that hinged thereupon. It was, according to Dr Sommer, originally an extension of the *Livre d'Artus*, and afterwards absorbed large portions of that book, which was thus reduced to the mere fragments now remaining.[2]

This theory of the evolution of the cycle puts aside the view that the part of the story between the *Merlin* and the *Lancelot* was expressly written to fill this gap. Had anyone attempted such a troublesome task he would surely have avoided the discrepancies that exist. Dr Sommer conjectures that the writers had access to a *Brut* or chronicle of the British kings, written later than that of Wace, and giving a fuller account of Uther Pendragon's reign than is found anywhere else, together with details about the birth and accession of Arthur and the character of Merlin differing from Borron's account, and other matters not consistent with the relevant parts of the extant cycle. From indications in *Yvain*, the *Chevalier de la Charrette*, and *Perceval*, it may reasonably be supposed that this *Brut*, or else a much-expanded Wace, was known to Chrétien de Troyes. It was from this that a large section was drawn and "clumsily adjusted to form the connecting link between

[1] H. O. Sommer, *The Structure of le Livre d'Artus* (1914), p. 44.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

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Robert's *Merlin* and the *Lancelot*." [1] Paulin Paris gave to the connecting narrative the name of *Le Livre d'Artus*. Dr Sommer would apply that title to a hypothetical compilation from which this connecting narrative was drawn.[2]

The third stage in the formation of the vulgate cycle was reached when Galahad supplanted Perceval as the hero of the quest. This involved the substitution of the *Grand Saint Graal* or *Estoire del Saint Graal* for Borron's *Joseph*, the interpolation of a fresh narrative of the quest, and still more drastic abbreviation of the *Livre d'Artus*. Thus the vulgate cycle eventually consisted of the following six branches :—the *Grand Saint Graal*, the prose rendering of Borron's *Merlin*, the dismembered remnant of the *Livre d'Artus*, the *Lancelot*, *La Queste del Saint Graal*, and the *Mort Artus*. In the vast compilation called the *Estoire* or *Grand Saint Graal* there are many differences from Borron's version of the early history given in *Joseph d'Arimathie* ; it was probably written for the express purpose of introducing Galahad instead of Perceval as the victorious hero of the quest. More readable and better known, either in the original French or in Malory's abridgment in the *Morte Darthur*, is the *Queste del Saint Graal* (*c.* 1220), in which Perceval is finally deposed as protagonist in favour of the spotless Galahad, the incarnation of Christian asceticism. This is a deeply religious story, full of moralisation, but free from Borron's mystical teaching. Examples will be quoted presently. Malory's first four books were reduced from the various manuscripts of the *Merlin* and its extensions, whilst the prose *Lancelot* supplied the main foundation for the latter part of his work, from Book XI. onwards. With the prose *Tristan*, already alluded to,[3] a couple of English poems, to be described later, on the last acts and the death of Arthur, and the unascertained source of the Beaumayns story in Book VII. ; this is a fairly complete enumeration of Malory's authorities.

The Vulgate cycle and Malory's sources

But a good many links are missing in our knowledge of the growth of the cycle, especially of the legend of the Grail. Miss Weston has put forward a theory that Galahad was not the second

[1] H. O. Sommer, Introduction to *Vulgate Versions*, xxi.-xxii. ; see also Miss Weston's *Legend of Sir Perceval*, ii. 12, where such a *Brut* is postulated between Wace (1155) and Layamon (1205), and tentatively ascribed to Martin of Rochester.

[2] H. O. Sommer, *Structure of le Livre d'Artus*, p. 47, note.

[3] See p. 107.

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but the third hero of the quest, Perceval having previously superseded the original champion, Gawain. Like Lancelot, Perceval was a new-comer, in spite of his wide currency in folk-lore. Gawain, on the contrary, is one of the oldest and most illustrious of Celtic heroes, though his character underwent a strange declension in the romances, until we find Malory[1] describing him as vengeable and bloodthirsty, a hater of the Round Table, and guilty of a treacherous assassination.[2] But Malory is inconsistent about Gawain, and thus furnishes evidence of how the ancient paladin, the mythic hero, had become misunderstood after losing his pride of place in legend.[3] If Gawain was the hero in the primary or heathen forms of the Grail legend, then Perceval took his place when the legend was given a Christian interpretation. Now there is good reason to suppose that Chrétien de Troyes, in his *Conte del Graal*, was relating in a more elaborate way a story that was widely current and of which there were already conflicting versions. One of his continuators, Wauchier de Denain, gives as his authority a Welsh story-teller Bleheris, who can hardly be other than the Bréri or Bledhericus mentioned by Giraldus Cambrensis.[4] Master Blihis is also cited as authority for the curious preamble affixed to some manuscripts of Chrétien's poem and known as the Elucidation. Wauchier speaks of his authority as the *Grand Conte*, which was, according to Miss Weston, a series of tales not yet Christianised, having Gawain, not Perceval, as their central figure.[5] The high renown of Gawain is certainly attested by the large number of metrical romances in Middle English in which he is the chief actor. Arthurian romance in this country between Layamon and Malory was almost entirely the romance of Gawain.

Gawain as hero of the Grail

These metrical romances lie outside our purview, as they contributed little or nothing to prose romance. The finest of them, however, *Syr Gawayne and the Grene Knyghte*, where Gawain fights with a burly adversary who rides off with his head under his arm, is very well known, and in conjunction with *The Weddynge of Syr Gawayne* bears witness to his prominence in ancient myth. He was probably a relic of an old Celtic system of nature worship.

[1] Bk. VII. 34. [2] Bk. X. 58.
[3] J. L. Weston, *The Legend of Sir Gawain*, 1897.
[4] See pp. 84 and 161.
[5] J. L. Weston, *From Ritual to Romance*, xiv.

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His adversary, clad in green and carrying a holly-bough, has been identified with the Celtic tree-god, and the bride in the companion story with "the feminine counterpart of that deity."[1] Even in Malory, Gawain does not lose his archaic attributes. The waxing and waning of his strength as the sun rises to the meridian and then declines shows that he was once a solar divinity His feats of arms are those of a titan, not of a man. He has more to do with mysterious chapels, and fairies, and other supernatural phenomena than any other three heroes put together. He sometimes takes precedence of Arthur; it even seems as if Arthur had taken over honours properly belonging to Gawain. Thus in Chrétien's *Conte del Graal* and in the *Merlin* Gawain appears in possession of Excalibur, and apparently has as much right to it as ever Arthur had, one of his oldest mythic appurtenances being a magic sword. Both in Chrétien's and in Wolfram's poem half the story is devoted to his doings. His blood-relationship to Arthur and his prowess and exploits, it has often been pointed out, are a singular parallel to those of Cuchullin, nephew of the high king, Conchobar, in Irish saga. Cuchullin outshone Conchobar, as Gawain outshone King Arthur. It is even probable that Gawain, before he was acclaimed as hero of the Grail, was already the hero of an achievement not less tremendous, a journey to the Celtic other world and the deliverance of a queen held in captivity there. This is assuredly the original meaning of his adventure in crossing the mysterious water and winning the magic castle, as related by Chrétien and Wolfram von Eschenbach.[2] With such a legendary record it is obvious that no one could be more suitable than Gawain for such another lofty mission as the achievement of the Grail.

Explanations of the Grail

The change spoken of at the beginning of this chapter as coming over the romances about the end of the twelfth century was twofold, and it was entirely due to the introduction of the Grail quest as a dominant motive. This resulted in a centralisation of interest and a unification of the various stories into a coherent cycle; it also resulted in a change of tone and atmosphere, which culminated in the lofty idealism and the deep solemnity of the stories in which the theme assumes a sacramental character.

[1] J. L. Weston, *The Legend of Sir Perceval*, pp. 302-303.
[2] J. L. Weston, *The Legend of Sir Gawain*, 1897.

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In Malory, and in the vulgate versions of the cycle from which he drew, the Grail is a Christian symbol of the highest sanctity. The vessel containing the blood of Christ brought by Joseph of Arimathea from the Holy Land has been identified with the vessel used by Christ at the Last Supper. The Lance, again, is the weapon with which Longinus pierced the side of the Redeemer upon the Cross.[1] The early history of the Grail is a romantic account of the conversion of Britain. The quest is the attempt to realise communion with God, its full achievement in the final versions being actual bodily presence at the miracle of incarnation in the eucharist, and actual perception of the change of the earthly elements into the body and blood of Christ.

The three main theories: (a) *Folk-lore origin*; (b) *Christian symbolism*; (c) *Ritual theory*

Although the Grail story admittedly contains non-Christian features, and was no doubt preceded by a Celtic legend of a magic vessel, a spear dripping blood, a maimed king, and a question on which mysterious consequences depended, some inquirers argue that Borron's sole object in his new version was to use it as a medium for eucharistic teaching. The doctrine of transubstantiation was then being laid down with uncompromising stringency by the Church, all differences of interpretation being finally quashed by the canons accepted at the fourth Lateran Council of 1215.[2] The older view, that the story originated with ecclesiastical legend-mongers, who worked up the tradition of Joseph of Arimathea and the miraculous transmission of the vessel used at the Last Supper, combined this with a local legend of a relic containing the blood of Christ, and so produced a dramatic story illustrating the Roman or the Byzantine Mass, is now almost entirely abandoned. That theory provides no reasonable explanation of such prominent features as the maimed king and the fateful question, even if it can be said to explain such forms of the Grail symbols as the Lance and Salver. Most people now agree that the legend was originally non-Christian and that it was taken over by the romancers, and its profane symbolism translated into Christian terms. Who was responsible for this transmutation when it was completed, and

[1] See above, p. 45.

[2] L. A. Fisher, *The Mystic Vision in the Grail Legend and in the Divine Comedy* (Columbia University Studies in English and Comparative Literature, New York, 1917). The author contends that the Grail romances were written to convey enlightenment on the mysteries of the holy eucharist.

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what is the meaning to be assigned to the more enigmatic occurrences in successive forms of the story, are a few among the host of questions raised by this and every theory of its genesis. Did Borron simply alter a story which he only half comprehended into a religious narrative to be understood literally; or did he consciously retell a story that had no secrets for him in such a way as to retain two meanings: one for the laity, but an inner one for those initiated into the mystic symbolism? If it be admitted that Borron did intend this double meaning, then the question arises, what was the nature of the occult teaching that he wished to convey? Was it only a more esoteric form of the Christian doctrines taught by the Church, or was it something heterodox and unsanctioned by ecclesiastical authority? This inquiry will lead to the consideration of a third view, which has been mooted during the last few years. It has been described as the ritual theory, since it is based on the supposition that the Grail stands for a body of mystical doctrines on the sources of life, with a series of symbolical rites practised from time immemorial as a means of influencing the powers that control the processes of nature. Only an outline of this latest theory can be given here, and first it will be well to see what can be made out by its opponents, those of them who would trace the origin to Celtic folk-lore.

Folk-lore theory

Sir John Rhys made a pretty exhaustive search in old Welsh literature and tradition for vestiges of the Grail legend, and satisfied himself that he had found enough to prove a Celtic source. But his daring parallels, ingenious etymologies, and brilliant conjectures are seen to be very hazardous when it is realised that they are based indiscriminately upon romances of no very remote date and Welsh poems of an uncertain age, as well as upon legend of unquestioned antiquity.[1] Nevertheless, he did unearth many interesting analogues. Welsh legend is full of tales about magic vessels, such as the Cauldron of the Head of Hades, which was carried off by Arthur and his men, as related in the *Book of Taliesin*; the Cauldron of Renovation, mentioned in "Branwen" in the *Mabinogion*; the Cauldron of the steward of the king of Ireland, in "Kilhwch and Olwen"; and others not a few. Wonderful

[1] *Arthurian Legend*, passim, see particularly xii.-xiii.

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properties have these various cauldrons, one of the most persistent being the capacity to provide food at need for any number of people. In association with one or other of them Rhys finds a revolving castle, like that which appears in the Grail romances; and he has little difficulty in detecting correspondences in place-names and other geographical features. Bron or Brons, the Grail-keeper, he identifies with Bran, god of the nether world, in Irish and Welsh myth, and asserts that "the voyage of Bron is but a Christian version of the voyage of Bran."

"Nay," sums up Rhys, "it is not improbable that Bran's head on a dish, and the poisoned spear with which he had been wounded, formed the originals which suggested the head brought in on a dish and the Bleeding Spear at the court of Peredur's second uncle. . . . Enough, in any case, has been said to show that the origin of Bron's Grail is to be sought in a Welsh story about Bran the Blessed, though no such is extant in the precise form which that of the Grail would seem to postulate."

With all due respect to a great Celtic scholar, one cannot help observing that to say such-and-such a conjecture is possible does not carry us very far, and Rhys does little else. Other scholars have pointed to counterparts of the sword, the spear, the cauldron, and other talismans in Irish myth; to the widespread Celtic tale of a mortal's sojourn in the world where time stands still, one version of which has Gawain as the adventurer; to the episode of the devastated land in the Mabinogi of Manawyddan,[1] and such like. Unsatisfactory comparisons have been rummaged out also with the bizarre situation of the maimed king and the question that is to heal both him and his realm. From analogies in Irish myth Alfred Nutt evolved the hypothesis of a death-in-life trance brought about by enchantment, and a breaking of the spell by the deliverer who asks the destined question.[2]

But, even if the validity of all this evidence be admitted, it is doubtful if any of it is relevant. These waifs and strays from the old mythology do not form parts of a coherent story; and it is almost impossible to imagine their coming together, either by accidental coalescence or by the plastic skill of a bard or romancer,

[1] See p. 89.
[2] A. Nutt, *The Legends of the Holy Grail* (Popular Studies, Nutt, 1902), p. 51.

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so as to make a connected story. There is no evidence that the Grail legend was ever current as a folk-tale. It comes into the world full-fledged, in that remarkable period of imaginative activity, the middle of the twelfth century. It appears, not as a popular story, but as one embodying hidden meanings, a story for the intellectuals rather than for the populace. It has all the signs of a secret tradition treasured by a family or a clan of *illuminati*; and even in its literary form it remains oracular, cryptic, double-tongued. The Arthurian matter had been growing up for centuries; its history can be traced and the gradual coalescence of the Tristan and other legends easily accounted for. The matter of the Grail, on the other hand, appears suddenly from nowhere, and, grafted forthwith upon this thriving stock, immediately alters its nature, root and branch. This sudden, epoch-making advent gives a certain preliminary likelihood to the third explanation of the Grail, the ritual theory.

The ritual theory

In Chrétien's unfinished *Conte del Graal* and in "Peredur," the central incident of the maimed king and the hero's failure to put the question that would have exorcised the curse remains an unsolved enigma; its significance is never explained and the story is left hanging in the air. As it stands, indeed, the story contains a glaring absurdity, since the disasters of the king and his land seem to be the result of the knight's incomprehension, not of an antecedent cause. Wauchier, in his contribution to the *Conte del Graal*, gives a more coherent and intelligible version of the episode, or of one that is its fellow. Gawain sees a lance bleeding into a cup, and also beholds the Grail, which is described as the rich Grail, because it provides those present with all the food that each of them liked best. He inquires concerning these marvels, but falls asleep before the explanation is ended. Thus he only partially succeeds in lifting the spell; the desert land is green again and the plants burst into flower, but the people bless him for having partly fulfilled their deliverance and curse him for not having wholly accomplished it. As already pointed out, the appearance of Gawain as quester may possibly mean that this was older than the forms of the story in which Perceval holds that position. Wauchier's version professes to be derived from Bleheris. According to the new theory, which has been expounded in a series of studies by Miss

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J. L. Weston,[1] the Welshman Bleheris, who probably died about the middle of the twelfth century, was the promulgator of a story with several branches in which the secrets of an esoteric cult were more or less darkly revealed. It was the tale known to Count Philip of Flanders.[2] It was the *Grand Conte* reverently cited by Wauchier. Here, to judge by such primary forms of the Grail story as Wauchier's and Wolfram's, the dramatic interest was focused, not upon the Grail itself, but upon the plight of the ailing king and land; the Grail plays an important part, but only as an instrument through which the object of the adventure will be achieved. That strange scene, the procession of the Grail, has been depicted by innumerable poets and romancers, from the mysterious Bleheris and Kiot, invoked as authorities by Wauchier and Wolfram respectively, to Wagner, and it is always a scene of mourning and lamentation. What is its meaning? What is it that is signified by the dead or disabled man on the bier and the wasted land that abide the word of the destined deliverer?

Analogies with the worship of Tammuz, Adonis, Attis

Parallels of various degrees of closeness are afforded by the world-wide rites and observances in primitive fertility cults, such as were practised in bygone ages by worshippers of the Babylonian god Tammuz, the Phœnician and Greek Adonis, and the Phrygian Attis. The disappearance of Tammuz from the earth, symbolising an intermission of the life-giving powers of Nature, was mourned with ceremonious wailing and prayers for his return. In the cult of Adonis and Attis there was a similar ritual. The descent of the god to the nether world was mourned with elaborate lamentations, and his return at the beginning of the year was greeted with universal rejoicings. The myths forming the basis of these cults were an anthropomorphic symbol of the animating energies of nature. These were the gods of fertility and of reproduction, by whose agency the earth was renewed, vegetation flourished, and animal life increased. When they departed, trees, grass, and crops withered, the springs of life were sealed up, the earth became a barren desert. Have we not here a possible meaning

[1] *The Legend of Sir Perceval*, 2 vols, 1909; *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, 1913; *From Ritual to Romance*, 1920. The last is a good summary of Miss Weston's case. See also W. A. Nitze, *The Fisher King in the Grail Romances* (Modern Language Association of America, XXIV.), 1909.

[2] See p. 128.

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for the Grail story of a dead or wounded or disabled king or god or other mysterious personage, and of the waste land which is restored to verdure and fertility at the achievement of the quest? May we not compare the weeping women who are otherwise inexplicable figures in various forms of the Grail story, because the writers did not know the true explanation, with the crowd of weeping and wailing women in the funeral rites for Adonis? Like Adonis the Fisher King is wounded in the thigh, which in the god's case is a recognised euphemism for disablement of the organs of virility, symbolising the loss of reproductive power and the paralysis of nature's energies, the consequences of which are visible in the wasted land. Surely these are not accidental correspondences.

Widespread forms of nature worship

Advocates of the ritual theory cite those passages in the *Rig-Veda* and *Mahabharata*, setting forth dramatically the work of Indra in freeing the waters and restoring fertility to the earth, as evidence of the largeness of this element in Aryan mythology.[1] The general resemblances become more precise in many of the mediæval and modern examples of beliefs and observances current among uncivilised peoples and the peasant classes, and evidently the vestiges of old nature cults like those of Tammuz, Adonis, and Attis. The death or incapacity of the vegetation god or the spirit of fruitfulness is still celebrated in mumming plays and uncouth semi-dramatic ritual in many parts of Germany, in Bohemia, Russia, and Italy, and among various tribes in Africa. The pantomime is often coarse and obscene. Phallic symbols and practices are the frequent accompaniments. Here, perhaps, is a clue to the enigmatic presence of the Lance and Cup in the Grail procession.[2] From the earliest times these have been used as sex symbols, the lance or spear standing for the male and the cup or similar vessel for the female element.[3] The blood which drips from the spear would thus represent the vital energy itself. There are variants of this symbolism, the Grail being sometimes not a cup, but a salver or dish; and sometimes there is a duplication, a sword figuring, usually a sword which has to be mended by the appointed hero, and a silver platter or two small platters.

[1] *From Ritual to Romance*, pp. 25-27.

[2] See, *e.g.*, Malory's *Morte Darthur*, Bk. XVII., chap. xx., where these objects are associated with an actual vision of the miracle of transubstantiation.

[3] *From Ritual to Romance*, vi., especially p. 71.

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Chrétien leaves the nature and appearance of the Grail undisclosed. In Wolfram's poem the Grail is a stone, of a mysterious and profoundly sacred character. Never is it a cauldron. It is borne in by a maiden, and its food-giving properties are not of its essence, or, indeed, invariably mentioned. The Celtic cauldron of plenty, the magic food-producing vessel, has certain analogies with the Grail in the form of a dish; but these analogies may have resulted from late and accidental association and do not appear to be original. The food is never provided from the Grail; but with the presence of this talisman the hall was "full filled with good odours, and every knight had such meats and drinks as he best loved in this world." [1] Possibly Miss Weston is right in her opinion that the Celtic group of symbols associated with a cauldron have a common original with the Grail symbols, but that the development has been on different lines—both being forms of life and fertility symbolism.[2]

Exoteric and esoteric meanings

Such are the outward forms of the myth; but an inner meaning is uniformly hinted at, the secret of the Grail which it is forbidden to reveal. This duality of meaning is preserved even when the Grail is identified with the tokens of the Passion; the higher mysteries are only for those who have been prepared by trial and purification for the full enlightenment. So, in the ancient ritual-drama, the uninitiated perceived the magic objects on the material plane, the end of which was to propitiate the life-powers on which their well-being depended; those who were initiated and understood the esoteric significance saw the objects on a higher plane, partook of spiritual food, enjoyed communion with the fount of life. It was the esoteric side of the Attis cult that brought it into intimate relationship with Mithraism, although the two myths are widely different. A place was found in Mithra worship for the Attis mysteries in the ceremonies of initiation; and, although the basic idea of initiation was different in the two cults, they possessed this in common, that their higher teaching had a spiritual object —attainment of the eternal world. Mithraism, with its popular mythology and sacraments, on the one hand, and its transcendental teaching on the other, was Christianity's most formidable rival in

[1] Malory, Bk. XIII., chap. vii.; *cp.* Bk. XI., chap. ii.; Bk. XVII., chap. xx.
[2] *From Ritual to Romance*, p. 71.

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the ancient world. But there were certain Christian sects who found a means of reconciling the Phrygian mysteries with the tenets of the conquering faith, identifying Attis with the Logos, and regarding the death and resurrection of the god and the mystic feast common to the two creeds as equivalent or identical.[1]

Transmission of the ancient cult

It is supposed by adherents of the ritual theory that these mystical cults were carried all over Europe by the Roman legionaries, as it is well known was the case with Mithraism, and that, after they had ceased to number many followers or to be celebrated in public, they continued to be practised in remote fastnesses among the mountains and elsewhere—for instance, in Wales. Mithraic remains have been found "in precisely the locality where we have reason to believe certain of the Gawain and Perceval stories to have originated."[2] Cherished in obscurity as a heterodox and unauthorised cult, the gnosis and the ritual made no appearance in literature until the twelfth century, when, it is supposed, the Welshman Bleheris, Bréri, or Bledhericus, who belonged to one of the families that had maintained the ancient tradition, made it the subject of a romantic story—the *Grand Conte* cited by Wauchier.[3] Chrétien de Troyes had no knowledge of the real meaning of what he was narrating. The legend was, in fact, remodelled from the outside by men who did not possess the inner knowledge.[4] Borron, on the contrary, was probably an initiate, and when he converted the Grail story into an intricate parable of the Christian eucharist he was well aware of all that he was doing. His Christianity was an esoteric Christianity, a transposition of the spirit and formulas of the occult faith into Christian terms. In the eucharistic feast he perceived, for those who were worthy and prepared, direct access to the sources of spiritual life. Such is the hypothesis now known as the Ritual Theory; it is ingenious and plausible, though the lapse of centuries between the flourishing of the ancient cult and its supposed reappearance in the ritual of the Grail is a formidable difficulty.

Christianisation of the symbols

The actual identification of the heathen talisman with the consecrated dish had presumably taken place before Borron wrote. Miss Weston offers the hypothesis that shortly after the Bleheris story had spread to France it was combined with a tradition of the

[1] *From Ritual to Romance*, xii.: "Mithra and Attis." [2] *Ibid.*, p. 179.
[3] See p. 152. [4] J. L. Weston, *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, p. 116.

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holy blood of Christ preserved in a local relic, an adaptation for which the ancient symbolism proved very convenient. This Saint Sang relic belonged to the abbey of Fescamp, consisting of the dried blood which Nicodemus was said to have taken with a knife from the holy wounds. The transfer of sanctity from the content to the container and equation with another hallowed or supernatural vessel was an easy operation. Then the abbey of Glastonbury, which belonged to the same Benedictine Order, seeking to participate in the prestige of such a legend, forged the necessary link by disseminating the story of Joseph of Arimathea, bringer of the Graïl to Britain. His legend is derived from the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus*, which had enjoyed wide vogue in this country since the eighth century, though it was little known on the Continent.[1] Wauchier does indeed refer to a book written at Fescamp, and the curious version of the Grail story called *Perlesvaus* [2] brings Perceval as Grail hero into contact with both Nicodemus and Joseph in a way that requires some such explanation.

Borron's task was to set forth the dual nature of the Grail and recount its early history under the form of the Joseph legend, and to combine this with the popular pseudo-history of Arthur. The next stage in the development of the Grail story was the elimination of profane elements, all traces of the nature cults, and its complete translation into the terms of a religious and sacramental history : this stage in the process is carried out in the *Queste del Saint Graal.* The story of the quest, which was perhaps originally the record, true or imaginary, of a knight's initiation into the lower degree of the life cult and his failure to achieve the higher, becomes at length a narrative of the Christian hero Galahad's attainment of the Grail, in which there remains no mysticism more profound than the magic rite of transubstantiation and the elaborate solemnity of Catholic ritual. Perceval, who at the outset had no more to do with the Grail than he had to do with King Arthur, was first displaced as hero owing to the greater popularity of Lancelot ; and, as Lancelot was too notorious a sinner to take the foremost place n an edifying story like the newly modelled quest, a son, Galahad,

[1] See p. 44.

[2] Translated by Sebastian Evans, who had erroneous views on its date and provenance, under the title, *The High History of the Holy Graal* (Temple Classics, 2 vols.), 1899.

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of unexceptionable purity, had to be invented for him, through whom Lancelot's fame increased vicariously. In the course of these changes the prose rendering of Borron's *Joseph* and *Merlin* was linked up first with a form of the prose *Lancelot* embodying a narrative of the quest, with Perceval still as hero ; and then the *Grand Saint Graal* ousted the *Joseph*, and the *Queste*, with Galahad as successful quester, ousted the version centring in Perceval.[1] The whole of this transformation was performed by French hands. The vulgate cycle is French from beginning to end. The British heroes Gawain and Perceval may have seemed ineligible for moral reasons for the lofty rôle of victorious Grail-seekers ; but it is easy to understand why French writers should put first Lancelot and then Galahad, both Frenchmen, in their place.[2]

Style of the romances

The prose of the thirteenth-century romances is characterised for the most part by a charming simplicity—the simplicity of perfect naturalness. This simplicity, which was more consciously sought by Malory, whose loose and primitive syntax is the syntax of the French prose from which he translated, is thrown into high relief if contrasted with the conceited, rhetorical style of such effusions as the story of *Asseneth*, a French prose tale of the following century, or with crude recensions like the specimen quoted of *Érec et Énide*. It was not scholars vain of their classical erudition, it was not the clerics, who produced this romantic prose, the English counterpart of which was not to appear until the time of Malory and Berners. The poets who shaped the Arthurian cycle belonged to the knightly classes, and the men of prose who paraphrased or continued their work received from the Church at most toleration, certainly not encouragement. Clerical prose, in the vernacular, was an intolerable hybrid, the sort of stuff to be expected from bookish persons who were in the habit of using Latin whenever they took up the pen.

But if we recognise what the romances really were we can understand the spontaneous nature of their style. They were the expression of emotional and imaginative ideals, and were written for people who loved story and pageant and colour. Further, they were compiled or adapted from poetic sources, or from the mass of

[1] H. O. Sommer, Introduction to *Vulgate Versions*, xvi.
[2] H. O. Sommer, *Structure of le Livre d'Artus*, p. 43.

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legendary lore which had long been the raw material of poetry. Thus they had little in common with the works of contemporary moralists and theologians, written in an artificial, Latinised prose because Latin was the regular medium of intellectual intercourse and edification seemed to require a like dignified medium. If the romancers gave up metre they still used the same kind of language —prose only in the negative sense that it was not verse.

Two quotations from the *Queste del Saint Graal*, which happens to have been translated by Malory with comparatively small abbreviation, will illustrate the ordinary pedestrian style of the romances, and also the ease with which they compassed great moments of spiritual rapture. The first aptly exemplifies the sacred symbolism of the devotional romances, telling the tale of the marvellous shield which no man might hang about his neck without grievous harm, until the coming of Galahad, the knight whose chastity was without flaw or stain. A prominent feature that Malory largely suppressed was the insistent moralisation,[1] which is often as arbitrary and unseasonable as that of the *Gesta Romanorum*.[2] At the close of each episode the spiritual signification is expounded at great length. Thus when Perceval all but succumbs to the wiles of an alluring damsel, but returns to his sober senses on seeing the cross upon his shield, a diffuse passage explains that the damsel is Satan, whose fall from heaven is related, and that her tent with its manifold pleasures and seductions represents the world. Her invitation to Perceval to rest there means that he would feed on earthly food and not sow good seed against the Day of Judgment. To tarry till nightfall meant until death, and she called him in the night because she feared the sun, which is Christ. So it proses on. Lancelot, in another passage, is called harder than stone, bitterer than wood, and more despised than a fig-tree; which epithets are laboriously explained by a certain hermit in several pages of allegorical exegesis.

Et quant che fu coze que iosephes fu au lit mortel. Eualac counut qu'il li couuenoit partir de chest sieucle. et vint deuant lui, si ploura mult

Not longe after that Ioseph was layd in his dedely bed / And whanne kynge Euelake sawe that /

[1] See, however, *Morte Darthur*, Bk. XIII., chap. xiv., and Bk. XIV., chap. vii.
[2] See p. 265 *et seq.*.

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tenrement. Et dist, " sire, puis ke vous me laissies, ore remainrai Je ausi comme tous seus en chest pais, ke pour l'amor de uous auoie ma terre laissie et ma nascion, pour dieu, puis k'il vous couuient partir de chest siecle, laissies moi de vous aucune ensainge qui apres vous me fache ramenbranche." " Sire," fist iosephes, " je le vous ferai." lors commencha a penser quel cose il li porroit ballier. et quant il ot grant pieche pense. si dist. " rois Mordains, fai moi aporter ichel escu que jou te ballai quant tu alas en la bataille sour tholomes." Et li rois le fist, ensi comme chil qui le faisoit porter od soi en tous les lieus ou il aloit, si fist aporter l'escu : a chel point qu'il fu aportes, auint k'il saina mult durement parmi le nes, si que iosephes ne pooit estankier et. il prist maintenant l'escu, et j fist de chelui meisme sanc vne crois, si com vous le vees. Et bien sachies que ch'est chil escus meismes dont ie vous cont que vous portes. Et quant il ot faite la crois telle comme vous poes veoir, il li dist, " ves chi chest escu ke je vous laisse en ramembranche de moy. Car vous saues bien que ceste crois est faite de mon sanc. Si sera tous iours ausi freche et ausi uermelle comme vous le poes ore-endroit veoir. tant comme li escus durra. ne il ne faura mie tost pour chou que nus iamais a son col ne le pendera pour qu'il soit chiualers qu'il ne s'en repenche. Juskes a tant que galaad li boins chiualers, li derrains del linaige nacien, le pendera au sien col. Et pour chou ne soit nus si

he made moche sorowe / and sayd / for thy loue I haue lefte my countrey / And sythe ye shalle departe oute of this world / leue me somme token of yours that I may thynke on you / Ioseph said that wille I doo ful gladly / Now brynge me your sheld that I toke yow whanne ye went in to bataille ageynst kyng Tolleme / Thenne Ioseph bled sore at the nose / so that he my3t not by no meane be staunched / And therupon that sheld he made a crosse of his owne blood / Now may ye see a remembraunce that I loue yow / for ye shalle neuer see this shelde but ye shal thynke on me / and it shall be alweyes as fresshe as it is now / And neuer shalle man bere this shelde aboute his neck but he shalle repente hit vnto the tyme that Galahad the good kny3te bere hit / and the laste of my lygnage shal leue hit aboute his neck that shall doo many merueyllous dedes / [1]

[1] *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. Oskar Sommer, Bk. XIII., chap. xii., p. 627.

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hardis qui a son col le pende, se chil non a qui dieus l'a destineie. Si ra telle occoison, que tout ausi comme en l'escu ont este veuwes meruellies grandes plus que autres, tout ausi verra on en lui meruelleuses proueches. Et plus haute uie que en autre chiualer." [1]

The next is perhaps the noblest passage in all the Grail romances, the last parting of Lancelot and Galahad, and Lancelot's despairing attempt to behold the mysteries of the Grail. It is transfused with a most moving pathos, and the French prose rises to an eloquence of exalted feeling that surpasses even the sustained grandeur of Malory's rendering [2]:

CAPITULUM xiij

After Easter, in the fresh season when everything turns towards verdure, and all the birds sing among the woods their sweet and diverse songs for the beginning of the sweet season, and all things tend more to joy than at any other time—in that season it befell one day about the hour of noon that they arrived in the edge of a forest before a cross. And then saw they come out of the forest a knight armed all in white, and richly horsed, who led in his right hand a white horse. When he saw the ship arrived he came thither as quickly as he could, and saluted the two knights on the high lord's behalf, and said to Galahad: "Sir knight, you have been long enough with your father, come out of the ship, and mount upon your horse, and go where adventure shall lead

Soo after on a mondaye hit befelle that they aryued in the edge of a foreste to fore a crosse / and thenne sawe they a knyghte armed al in whyte and was rychely horsed / and ledde in his ryght hand a whyte hors / and soo he cam to the shyp and salewed the two knyghtes on the hyghe lordes behalf / and sayd Galahad syr ye haue ben longe yneugh with your fader / come oute of the ship / and starte vpon this hors / and goo where the aduentures shall lede the in the quest of the sancgreal / thenne he wente to his fader and kyst hym

[1] *La Queste del Saint Graal*, ed. F. J. Furnivall (Roxburghe Club), London, 1864, pp. 29-30.

[2] For the French original see illustrations at end of this chapter.

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you, following the quest of the realm of Logres and bringing it to an issue." And when he heard this adventure, he ran to his father, and kissed him very sweetly and said, "Fair sweet father, I wot not whether I shall see you more; I commend you to our Lord, that he hold you in his service"; and then began the one and the other to weep.

When Galahad came out of the ship and mounted his horse, there spake to them a voice, "Think each one for to do well, for the one shall not see the other until the great and dreadful day when our Father shall render to every one that which he hath deserved, and this will be the day of doom." When Lancelot heard these words, he said to Galahad, "Since I am parting from thee for ever, pray the High Master for me that he let me not depart from his service." And Galahad answered him, "Sire, no prayer availeth so much as yours; this concerneth yourself"; and so they parted from each other. And therewith Galahad entered into the forest, and the wind smote the sail and soon drove Lancelot from the shore, and was alone save for the body of the damsel. And so he wandered for more than a month in the midst of the sea, and was in such plight that he slept very little; but he prayed very fervently to our Lord that he would lead him to some place where he might see something of the Holy Grail. So it befell on a night at midnight he arrived beneath a castle, which was very rich and fair, and he saw a postern that was always open towards the sea, for those within set no guard swetely and sayd / Fair swete fader I wote not whan I shal see you more tyl I see the body of Ihesu Cryst / I praye yow sayd launcelot praye ye to the hyghe fader that he hold me in his seruyse and soo he took his hors / and ther they herd a voyce that sayd thynke for to doo wel / for the one shal neuer see the other before the dredeful day of dome / Now sone galahad said laūcelot syn we shal departe / and neuer see other / I pray to ꝑe hyȝ fader to conserue me and yow bothe / Sire said Galahad noo prayer auaylleth soo moche as yours / And there with Galahad entryd in to the foreste / And the wynde aroos and drofe Launcelot more than a moneth thurgh oute the see where he slepte but lytyl but prayed to god that he myght see some tydynges of the Sancgreal / Soo hit befelle on a nyghte at mydnyghte he aryued afore a Castel on the bak syde whiche was ryche and fayre / and there was a posterne opened toward the see / and was open withoute ony kepynge / sauf two lyons kept the entre / and the moone shone clere / Anone sir launcelot herd a voyce

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on that side. For there were two lions there, which kept the entry in such manner that none could enter between them, wherefore none dare enter by that postern.

At the hour when the ship arrived at this place, the moon shone very clear, and one could see far and wide. Anon a voice was heard saying, "Go out of this ship, and enter into the castle, where thou shalt find a great part of what thou seekest and hast so much desired to see." And when he heard this, he ran at once to his arms, leaving nothing behind that he had brought with him, and so went to the gate, and found the lions. Thinking that he could not pass without fighting, he set his hand to his sword and prepared to defend himself. When he had drawn his sword, he looked up and saw a hand come, which smote him on the arm so sore that the sword flew out of his hand. Then heard he a voice which said: "O man of evil faith and poor belief, wherefore trustest thou more in thy hand than in thy Creator? Thou wert caitiff to believe thine armour might more avail thee than he in whose service thou art set."

Lancelot was so abashed at these words, and at the hand that had stricken him, that he fell to the earth all thunderstruck, so that he knew not whether it was day or night. And when he was recovered, he said, "Ah, good Father, Jesu Christ, I give thee thanks that thou deignest to reprove me of my foolishness. Now see I well that thou holdest me for thy servant, since thou showest me token of misbelief." Then put he his sword again that sayd Launcelot goo oute of this shyp / and entre in to the Castel / where thou shalt see a grete parte of thy desyre / Thenne he ran to his armes and soo armed hym / and soo wente to the gate and sawe the lyons / Thenne sette he hard to his suerd and drwe hyt / Thenne there came a dwerf sodenly and smote hym on the harme so sore that the suerd felle oute of his hand / Thenne herd he a voyce say O man of euylle feyth and poure byleue wherfor trowest thou more on thy harneis than in thy maker / for he myghte more auayle the than thyn armour in whos seruyse that thou are sette / Then said launcelot / say u fader ihesu Cryste I thanke the of thy grete mercy that thou repreust me of my mysdede / Now see I wel that ye hold me for youre seruaunt / thenne toke he ageyne his suerd and putte it vp in his shethe and made a crosse in his forhede / and came to the lyons / and they made semblaunt to doo hym harme / Notwithstandynge he passed by hem without hurte and entryd in to the castel to the chyef fortresse / and there

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in the sheath, and said that for him it should never be drawn again, but he would put himself in our Lord's mercy, "And if it please him that I die it will be for the saving of my soul; but if it be that I escape, may it be turned to my honour." Then he made the sign of the true cross in his forehead, and commending himself to our Lord, came to the lions, and they sat down at once when they saw him draw nigh, and made no semblance to do him harm; so he passed between them without their touching him, and came to the principal way, and ascended to the castle. Now it was the very middle of the night, and so befell that Lancelot found no one to hold his stirrup, for they were all asleep, so he tied his horse to a tree, and came to the steps, which he mounted until he came into the great hall. And when he had come up, he looked on every side, but saw neither man nor woman, and marvelled greatly, for so fine a palace and so noble a chamber he would never have believed could be without people. So he bethinks him that he will go on until he finds some person who will tell him where he has arrived, for he knows not in what country he is; and at last he comes to a chamber of which the door was shut and well fastened, and he set his hand thereto and opened it forthwith. Then he listened, and heard a voice, which sang so sweetly that it seemed no voice of mortal thing, but of spiritual, and him thought it said, "Glory and praise and honour be to thee, Father of Heaven."

When Lancelot heard what the

where they al at rest / thenne Launcelot entryd in so armed / for he fond noo gate nor dore but it was open / And at the last he fond a chamber wherof the dore was shytte / and he sette his hand therto to haue opened hit / but he myghte not

Capitulum xv

Thenne he enforced hym mykel to vndoo the dore / thenne he lystned and herd a voyce whiche sange so swetely that it semed none erthely thynge / and hym thought the voyce said Ioye and honour be to the fader of heuen / Thenne Launcelot kneled doun to fore the chamber / for wel wyst he that there was the Sancgreal within that chamber / Thenne sayd he Fair swete fader Ihesu Cryst yf euer I dyd thyng that pleasyd the lord / for thy pyte no haue me not in despyte for my synnes done afore tyme / and that thou shewe some thynge of that I seke / And with that he sawe the chamber dore open and there came oute a grete clerenes / that the hows was as bryghte as all the torches of the world had ben there / So cam he to the

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voice said, his heart was melted more and more, and he kneeled down before the chamber, for he wist that the Holy Grail was within. Then said he entreatingly, "Fair sweet Father Jesu Christ, if ever I did thing that pleased thee, have me not in despite, but show me something of that I seek." And when Lancelot had said this, he looked before him, and saw so great a light in the chamber as if the sun had descended there, and with that radiance was the house so bright as if all the torches of the world had been burning there. And when he saw this, he had such a desire to know whence the great light came that he forgot everything, and came to the chamber door, and would have entered, when a voice said to him, "Flee, Lancelot, and enter not." When Lancelot heard this, he withdrew him aback right heavy, but nevertheless looked into the chamber, and saw upon a table the holy vessel covered with green samite, and many angels about it, surrounding the holy vessel, holding censers of silver, and burning candles, and another held a cross and the ornaments of an altar, each performing his appointed duty. And before the holy vessel he saw a man clothed as a priest, and it seemed that he was at the sacring of the mass. And it seemed to Lancelot, when the body of the Lord should be lifted up, that above the good man's hands were three men, whereof the two put the third, the youngest by likeness, between the priest's hands, and so he lifted him up right high, and made semblance that he showed him to the people. And Lancelot looked and

chamber dore / and wold haue entryd / And anone a voyce said to hym / Flee launcelot / and entre not / for thou oughtest not to doo hit / And yf thou entre / thou shalt forthynke hit / Thenne he withdrewe hym abak ryght heuy / Thenne loked he vp in the myddes of the chamber / and sawe a table of syluer and the holy vessel couerd with reed samyte / and many angels aboute hit / wherof one helde a candel of waxe brennyng and the other held a crosse and the ornementys of an aulter / And bifore the holy vessel he sawe a good man clothed as a preest / And it semed that he was at the sacrynge of the masse / And it semed to Launcelot that aboue the preestes handes were thre men wherof the two putte the yongest by lykeness bitwene the preestes handes / and soo he lyfte hit vp ryght hyhe / and it semed to shewe so to the peple / And thenne launcelot merueyled not a lytyl / For hym thou3t the preest was so gretely charged of the fygure that hym semed that he shold falle to the erthe / And whan he sawe none aboute hym that wolde helpe hym /

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marvelled not a little, for him thought the priest was so greatly charged of the figure which he held, that it seemed to him that those who were with him would not come to his succour. Then he had great craving to go in, that he forgot the forbiddance that had been laid upon him.

Then came he to the door a great pace, and said, "Fair Father Jesu Christ, let it not be turned to pain or damnation though I help the good man which hath great need of help." Right so entered he into the chamber, and came towards the table of silver, and when he came nigh he felt a breath of wind so hot that him thought, as indeed it was, that it smote him in the face, and it seemed to be all burning. And he had no power to go further. Like one who has lost the power of his body, and his hearing and his seeing, he was as if he were dead, nor had he a member by which he could aid himself. Then felt he many hands which bare him away, and when they had taken him by the head and the heels, they put him outside the chamber, and left him lying there.[1]

Thenne came he to the dore a grete paas and sayd / Faire fader Ihesu Cryst ne take hit for no synne though I helpe the good man whiche hath grete nede of help / Ryghte soo entryd he in to the chamber and cam toward the table of syluer / and whanne he came nyghe he felt a brethe that hym thoughte hit was entremedled with fyre whiche smote hym so sore in the vysage that hym thoughte it brent his vysage / and there with he felle to the erthe and had no power to aryse / as he that was soo araged that had loste the power of his body and his herynge and his seynge / Thenne felte he many handes aboute hym whiche tooke hym vp / and bare hym oute of the chamber dore / withoute ony amendynge of his swoune / and lefte hym there semyng dede to all peple / [2]

English Arthurian romance

For a century and more after Layamon, romance in England fell into the hands of journeymen minstrels, whose work is of small account in comparison with the finished poems and the strange and wonderful prose romances written during this period in France. Those minstrels had as little ambition as originality, and were content to paraphrase, in a matter-of-fact way and in the pedestrian ballad style of oral recitation, the less recondite adventures in the French romances, without troubling their heads about shades of sentiment, codes of love ethics, or mystic symbolism. They no doubt worked

[1] For text see Appendix A to this chapter.
[2] Sommer's *Malory*, Bk. XVII., chaps. xiv.-xv., pp. 709-712.

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in fresh material now and then from current folk-tales; the many lays, for instance, in which Gawain is the predominant figure are peculiarly English in manners, temper, and scenery. But even the romances that seem most English may possibly have been adapted from French originals now lost; and where the insular derivative can be placed side by side with a Continental story we find ourselves comparing a rustic rhymester with a poet two centuries ahead of him in literary accomplishment.

In the second half of the fourteenth century, however, there was a fresh outburst of poetical activity in England, resulting, among other things, in the production of numerous metrical romances on the Arthurian gests, which were all the mode. Some of the writers were not content to borrow from the wealth of material now available in French prose, but went to the fountain-head in Geoffrey of Monmouth, or his translator Wace, and native tradition. Several, like the authors of the Thornton *Morte Arthure* and *Syr Gawayne and the Grene Knyghte*, showed independence of spirit and great constructive skill. This revival prepared the way for Malory, who had some of these later poems before him in preparing his immortal compilation. Unfortunately the tale of Gawain and his encounters with the Green Knight did not come into Malory's scheme; but he made good use of the great northern alliterative poem known from the scrivener who did the manuscript as the "Thornton *Morte Arthure*." Both these works have been ascribed to the Scots poet Huchown of the Awle Ryale, along with many other fine poems of this era,[1] by ingenious reasoning that need not detain us. Whoever the poet of the *Morte Arthure* may have been, he was a spirited story-teller, and painted a vivid picture of the rich and crowded life of Arthur's world, as a courtier of the Plantagenet kings would imagine it.

The "Thornton Morte Arthure"

Romance at this time was tending towards more realism, but not the realism sought by the modern historical novelist. Taking their stories and their personages from the romantic lore which was the common heritage, the abler among the poets seem to have intentionally made the picture as like as possible to the life of their own day. The Arthur of the Thornton poem is a good deal more

[1] See Sir I. Gollancz, *Pearl*, pp. xliii.-xlv.; G. Neilson, *Huchown of the Awle Ryale*, 1902; *Cambridge Hist. of Eng. Lit.*, i., pp. 320-334, and ii., pp. 115-124.

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than an ideal reflection of the warlike and chivalrous Edward III., and the account of the great campaign in France more than an indirect simile of the late war. There are many familiar allusions to domestic occurrences, local usages, and legal matters which show that the author was thinking more of the England of his own time than of Arthurian Britain. Such a slip as his reference to the enemy in the great sea-fight as "Spanyolis" betrays him completely. As Dr Neilson pointed out, the writer, Huchown or whoever he may have been, must have had his head full, when he painted this battle scene, of the English victory over the Spaniards off Winchelsea in 1350; and when he described Arthur's overthrow of the emperor in the vale of Sessoyne he planned the engagement on the lines of Crécy—an English triumph then fresh in everyone's mind. Sessoyne is not Saxony, as it used to be translated, but the name of an obscure village in Picardy near the field of Crécy.

The substance of the story, Arthur's war against Lucius, was derived from Geoffrey of Monmouth's history, either direct or through an intermediate version.[1] But the writer handled this in a free and imperious way, amplifying, embellishing, and reconstructing with considerable architectural skill. In turn he provided material for Malory's fifth book and for the altered conclusion of the story of Arthur in the last two books; but Malory follows the new, not the old story of Guenevere and Modred, and omits a great deal that is recounted here. Yet some of his finest passages owe much to the powerful imagination of this worthy successor to Layamon.

An oft-quoted description in Malory is that of Arthur's vision of the bear and the dragon:

> And as the king lay in his cabin in the ship, he fell in a slumbering, and dreamed a marvellous dream: him seemed that a dreadful dragon did drown much of his people, and he came flying out of the west, and his head was enamelled with azure, and his shoulders shone as gold, his belly like mails of a marvellous hue, his tail full of tatters, his feet full of fine sable, and his claws like fine gold; and an hideous flame of fire flew out of his mouth, like as the land and water had flamed all of fire. After him seemed there came out of the orient a grimly boar all black in a cloud, and his paws as big as a post; he was rugged looking roughly, he was the foulest beast

[1] Perhaps from the *Mort Artus* belonging to the superseded *Livre d'Artus* used in building up the vulgate cycle (see H. O. Sommer, *The Structure of le Livre d'Artus*, p. 36), possibly through the amplified Wace.

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that ever man saw, he roared and romed so hideously that it were marvel to hear.[1]

Notice how the prose-writer's most effective touches were in some instances borrowed word for word from the alliterative poet :

The kynge was in a gret cogge, with knyghtez fulle many,
In a cabane enclosede, clenlyche arayede ;
With-in on a ryche bedde rystys a littylle,
And with the swoghe of the see in swefnynge he felle.
Hym dremyd of a dragone, dredfulle to be-holde,
Come dryfande ouer the depe to drenschene hys pople,
Ewen walkande owte of the weste landez,
Wanderande vnworthyly ouere the wale ythez ;
Bothe his hede and hys hals ware halely alle ouer
Oundyde of azure, enamelde fulle faire :
His scoulders ware schalyde alle in clene syluere.
Schreede ouer alle the schrympe with schrinkande poyntez ;
Hys wombe and hys wenges of wondyrfulle hewes,
In meruaylous maylys he mountede fulle hye ;
Whayme that he towchede de was tynt for euer !
Hys feete ware floreschede alle in fyne sabylle,
And syche a vennymous flayre flowe fro his lyppez,
That the flode of the flawez all one fyre semyde !
Thane come of the Oryente, ewyne hym agaynez,
A blake bustous bere abwene in the clowdes,
With yche a pawe as a poste, and paumes fulle huge,
With pykes fulle perilous, alle plyande thame semyde,
Lothene and lothely, lokkes and other,
Alle with lutterde legges, lokerde vnfaire,
ffiltyrde vnfrely, wyth fomaunde lyppez,
The fouleste of fegure that fourmede was euer !
He baltyrde, he bleryde, he braundyschte ther-after ;
To bataile he bounnez hym with bustous clowez :
He romede, he rarede, that roggede alle the erthe !
So ruydly he rappyd at to ryot hym seluene ![2]

The battle pieces are Homeric in their gory realism and savage gusto ; the griding of iron weapons, the war-cries and curses of the men-at-arms, the groans of the dying sound fiercely in the alliterative tramp of the verses. Malory is not appalled by certain horrible examples of barbarism, such as the slaughter of his own mother by

[1] *Malory*, Bk. V., chap. iv.

[2] *Morte Arthure*, ed. E. Brock (E.E.T.S.), ll. 756-785. For translation and corresponding passages from Geoffrey of Monmouth, Wace, and Layamon, see Appendix B to this chapter.

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Gaheris, and he does not shrink from the horrid details in his narrative of Arthur's duel with the giant of St Michael's Mount :

Thenne the gloton anone starte vp and tooke a grete clubbe in his hand / and smote at the kynge that his coronal fylle to the erthe / and the kynge hytte hym ageyn that he carf his bely and cutte of his genytours / that his guttes and his entraylles fylle doune to the ground / thenne the gyaunt threwe awey his clubbe / and caught the kynge in his armes that he crusshyd his rybbes / Thenne the thre maydens knelyd doune and callyd to Cryst for helpe and comforte of Arthur / And thenne Arthur weltred and wrong / that he was other whyle vnder and another tyme aboue / And so weltryng and walowynge they rolled doune the hylle / tyl they came to the see marke / and euer as they soo weltred / Arthur smote hym with his daggar / and it fortuned they came to the place / where as the two knyghtes were and kepte Arthurs hors / thenne when they sawe the kynge fast in the gyaunts armes / they came and losed hym / And thenne the kynge commaunded syr kaye to smyte of the gyaunts hede / and to sette it vpon a truncheon of a spere / and bere it to syre howel / and telle hym that his enemy was slayne.[1]

Now listen to the words of the Thornton poet :

Thane he romyede [2] and rarede, and ruydly he strykes
ffulle egerly at Arthure, and one the erthe hittez
A swerde lenghe with-in the swarthe,[3] he swappez [4] at ones,
That nere swounes the kynge for swoughe [5] of his dynttez !
Bot 3it the kynge sweperly [6] fulle swythe [7] he by-swenkez,[8]
Swappez [9] in with the swerde that it the swange [10] brystedde [11] ;
Bothe the guttez and the gorre guschez owte at ones,
That alle englaymez [12] the grasse, one grounde ther [13] he standez !
Thane he castez the clubb, and the kynge hentez,[14]
On the creeste of the cragg he caughte hyme in armez,
And enclosez hyme clenly,[15] to cruschene hys rybbez ;
So harde haldez he that hende,[16] that nere his herte brystez !
Thane the balefulle [17] bierdez [18] bownez to the erthe,
Kneland and cryande, and clappide theire handez,—
" Criste comforthe 3one knyghte, and kepe hyme fro sorowe,
And lette neuer 3one fende felle hyme olyfe [19] ! " [20]

[1] Malory, Bk. V., chap. v.
[2] Roared.
[3] Sward.
[4] Strikes.
[5] Sway or swing.
[6] Quickly, nimbly.
[7] Swiftly.
[8] Labours.
[9] Strikes.
[10] Loins.
[11] Brake.
[12] Rendered all slimy.
[13] Where.
[14] Seizes.
[15] Entirely.
[16] Hold, grip.
[17] Wretched, sorrowful.
[18] Women.
[19] Of or from life.
[20] Ll. 1124-1139.

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In the muster-roll of the Roman forces the epic sound of great names is used with an impressiveness that Malory did not fail to re-echo :

Thane sir Lucius lordlyche lettres he sendys
Onone[1] in-to the Oryente, with austeryne[2] knyghtez,
Tille Ambyganye and Orcage, and Alysaundyre eke,
To Inde and to Ermonye, as Ewfrates rynnys,
To Asye, and to Affrike, and Ewrope the large,
To Irritayne, and Elamet, and alle thase owte ilez ;
To Arraby and Egipt, tille erles and other,
That any erthe occupyes in thase este marches
Of Damaske and Damyat, and dukes and erles ;
ffor drede of his daungere they dresside theme sone ;
Of Crete and of Capados the honourable kyngys
Come at his commandmente, clenly[3] at ones ;
To Tartary and Turky, whene tythynngez es comene,
They turne in by Thebay, terauntez fulle hugge,
The flour of the faire folke, of Amazonnes landes ;
Alle that ffaillez on the felde be forfette fore euere !
Of Babyloyne and Baldake the burlyche[4] knyghtes,
Bayous with theire baronage bydez no langere ;
Of Perce, and of Pamphile, and Preter Johne landes,

Well, said Lucius, before Easter I suppose to pass the mountains and so forth into France, and there bereeve him his lands with Genoese and other mighty warriors of Tuscany and Lombardy. And I shall send for them all that be subjects and allied to the empire of Rome to come to mine aid. And forthwith sent old wise knights unto these countries following: first, to Ambage and Arrage, to Alisandrie, to Inde, to Hermonie, where as the river of Euphrates runneth into Asia, to Affrike, and Europe the large, to Ertaine and Elamie, to Arabie, Egypt, and to Damaske, to Damiete and Cayer, to Capodoce, to Tarce, Turkey, Pounce, and Pampoylle. to Surrie, and Galacie. And all these were subject to Rome, and many more, as Greece, Cyprus, Macedone, Calabre, Cateland, Portingale, with

[1] Anon. [2] Stern. [3] Well, straightway. [4] Tall, burly, bowerly.

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Iche prynce with his powere appertlyche [1] graythede [2] ;
The Sowdane of Surry assemblez his knyghtes,
ffra Nylus to Nazarethe, nommers fulle huge ;
To Garyere and to Galelé they gedyre alle at ones ;
The Sowdanes that ware sekyre [3] sowdeours to Rome,
They gadyrede ouere the Grekkes See with greuous wapyns,
In theire grete galays, with gleterande scheldez ;
The kynge of Cyprys one the see the Sowdane habydes,
With alle the realles [4] of Roodes, areyede with hyme one ;
They sailede with a syde wynde oure the salte strandez :
Sodanly the Sarazenes, as theme selfe lykede,
Craftyly at Cornett the kynges are aryefede,
ffra the ceté of Rome sexti myle large.
Be that the Grekes ware graythede, a fulle gret nombyre,
The myghtyeste of Macedone, with mene of tha marches,
Pulle and Pruyslande presses with other,
The lege-mene of Lettow with legyons ynewe [5] :
Thus they semble in sortes,[6] summes fulle huge,
Sowdanes and Sarazenes owt of sere [7] landes
The Sowdane of Surry and sextene kynges,
At the cetee of Rome assemblede at ones.[8]

many thousands of Spaniards. Thus all these kings, dukes, and admirals assembled about Rome with sixteen kings at once, with great multitude of people.[9]

[1] Openly.
[2] Arrayed.
[3] Trusty.
[4] Nobles.
[5] Enough.
[6] Troops.
[7] Various.
[8] *Morte Arthure*, ll. 570-609.
[9] Malory, Bk. V., chap. ii.

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The end of the poem differs entirely from Malory's version; it is, in short, the termination that had served Geoffrey, Wace, and Layamon, while Malory, or rather the author of the *Mort Artus* whom he followed, having dealt with this Continental war already, had to provide another, against Lancelot this time, to bring about the Nemesis recounted in the twentieth and twenty-first books of the *Morte Darthur*. Having invaded Italy, Arthur hears of Modred's treason and returns to reconquer his kingdom. There is a stubborn sea-fight. Gawain, the foremost paladin of this chronicle of Arthurian chivalry, wading ashore, is slain in an attack on the usurper; and then a terrific battle is joined, sixty thousand Danes, Picts, Sessoynes (Saxons), Irish, and Saracens [1] against Arthur's eighteen hundred. Though victorious, the king finds himself bereft of his knights, who lie dead around him. He slays Modred, himself receiving a mortal wound, and is carried to Glastonbury, where he dies and is interred, "as the Bruytte tellys."

The North Country author was a very conservative poet, in spite of his innovations in colour and tone.

According to Malory, Sir Gawain gets his hurt in the strife with Lancelot, and is found dead in a boat after the disembarkation of Arthur's host and the battle with Modred. Malory has nothing about Gawain's last speech to his men. But it is so good an illustration of the poet's character-drawing, as well as of his epical style, that the following modernised rendering may be ventured :—

Then Sir Gawain greeted with his grey eyes,
For grief of his good men that he must guide.
He wist that they wounded were, and weary forfoughten;
And what for wonder and woe all his wit failed.
And then, sighing he said, with springing tears,
"We are with Saracens beset on every side!
I sigh not for my self, so help our Lord;
But to see us surprised my sorrow is the more.
Be ye doughty to-day, yon dukes shall be yours!
For dear Dryghten [2] this day, dread ye no weapon.

[1] Originated in a misreading of *Saisnes*, French for Saxons.
[2] Lord.

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We shall end this day as excellent knights,
Even to endless joy with the holy angels.
Though we have unwittingly wasted ourselves,
We shall work all weal in the worship of Christ.
And spite of yon Saracens, I sicker you my troth,
We shall sup with our Saviour solemnly in heaven,
In presence of that precious, prince of all other,
With prophets and patriarchs and apostles full noble,
Before his freelike face that formed us all.
Yonder to yon yield-soons, he that yields him ever,
Quilst he is quick and unquelled with hands,
Be he nevermore saved, nor succoured of Christ,
But Satan his soul sink into hell." [1]

The stanzaic "Morte Arthur"

Another *Morte Arthur*, dating about half-a-century later, is by no means equal, though interesting in parts, especially as source of that pretty idyll, the love tragedy of Elaine, the maid of Astolat.[2] The closing scene in the story of Arthur, familiar to us in Malory's prose and Tennyson's blank verse, is thus recounted :

The kynge tornyd hym there he stode,
To syr Bedwere with wordys kene :
" Have Excalaber, my swerde good ;
A better brond was neuyr sene ;
Go, Caste it in the salt flode
And thou shalt se wonder. as I wene.
hye the faste, for crosse on Rode,
And telle me what thou hast ther sene."

The knyghte was both hende [3] and free,
To save that swerd he was full glad,[4]
And thought " whethyr I better bee,
yif neuyr man it After had [5] ;
And I it caste in-to the see,
Off mold was neuyr man so mad."
The swerd he hyd vndyr A tree,
And sayd : " syr, I ded as ye me bad."

[1] *Morte Arthure*, ll. 3790-3812.
[2] Malory, Bk. XVIII., chaps. ix.-xx.
[3] Gentle, courteous.
[4] Eager, desirous.
[5] Should I be any the better if no man had it afterwards ?

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"What saw thow there?" than sayd the kynge,
"Telle me now, yif thow can."
"Sertes, syr," he sayd, "nothynge
But watres depe And wawes wanne."
"A! now thou haste broke my byddynge!
Why haste thou do so, thow false man?
A-nother bode [1] thou muste me brynge."
Thanne careffully [2] the knyght forthe Ranne

And thought the swerd yit he wold hyde,
And keste the scauberke in the flode.
"yif Any Aventurs shall be-tyde,
There-by shall I se tokenys good."
In-to the see he lette the scauberke glyde;
A whyle on the land hee there stode,
Than to the kynge he wente that tyde,
And sayd: "syr, it is done, by the Rode."

"Saw thou Any wondres more?"
"Sertys, syr, I saw nought."
"A! false traytor," he sayd thore,[3]
"Twyse thou haste me treson wroght."
That shall thou rew sely [4] sore;
And, be thou bold, it shal be bought."
The knyght then cryed: "lord, thyn ore [5]!"
And to the swerd sone he sought.

Syr bedwere saw that bote [6] was beste,
And to the good swerd he wente;
In-to the see he hyt keste;
Than myght he se what that it mente.
There cam An hand with-outen Reste [7]
Oute of the water And feyre it hente,
And brandysshyd As it shuld braste,
And sythe, as gleme, A-way it glente,[8]

To the kynge A-gayne wente he thare,
And sayd: "leve [9] syr, I saw An hand;
Oute of the water it cam All bare,
And thryse brandysshyd that Ryche brande."

[1] Report. [2] Sadly. [3] Then.
[4] Very. [5] Thy mercy. [6] Amends.
[7] Delay. [8] Flashed, glinted. [9] Dear.

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" helpe me sone that I ware there."
he lede hys lord vnto that stronde ;
A ryche shyppe, with maste And ore,
Full of ladyes, there he fonde.

The ladyes, that were fayre and free,
Curteysly the kynge gan they fonge,[1]
And one that bryghtest was of blee [2]
wepyd sore and handys wrange.
" Broder," she sayd, " wo ys me ! "
Fro lechyng [3] hastow be to longe.
I wote that gretely greuyth me,
For thy paynes Ar full stronge."

The knyght kest [4] A rewfull rowne,[5]
There he stode, sore and vnsownde,[6]
And sayde : " lord, whedyr Ar ye bowne [7] ?
Allas ! whedyr wyll ye fro me fownde [8] ? "
The kynge spake with A sory sowne [9] :
" I wylle wende a lytell stownde [10]
In-to the vale of Aveloyne,
A whyle to hele me of my wounde."

Whan the shyppe from the land was broght,
Syr bedwere say of hem no more ;
Throw the forest forthe he soughte,
On hyllys and holtys hore.
Of hys lyffe Rought [11] he Ryght noght,
All nyght he went wepynge sore ;
A-gaynste the day he fownde ther wrought
A chapelle by-twene ij holtes hore.[12]

Now and then the hobbling stanzas rise into genuine poetry, as in Guenevere's appeal to Sir Bors :

The quene wepte and sighed sore,
To bors de gawnes went she thoo,[13]
On knes by-fore hym fell she thore,[14]
That nyghe her hert braste in two :

[1] Take, receive. [2] Face, complexion. [3] Leech-craft, medical treatment.
[4] Uttered. [5] Speech. [6] Ailing. [7] Prepared, bound.
[8] Strive. [9] Utterance. [10] While. [11] Recked.
[12] *Le Morte Arthur*, ed. J. Douglas Bruce (E.E.T.S.), ll. 3446-3525.
[13] Then. [14] There.

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"lord bors," she seyde, "thyn ore !
To-day I shall to dethe goo,
Bot yiffe [1] thy worthy wille wore
To brynge my lyffe oute of thys woo."

Bors de gawnes stille stode
And wrothe a-way hys yȝen wente.
"Madame," he sayde, "by crosse on rode
Thou art wele worthy to be brente [2];
The nobleste bodye of flesshe and blode
That euyr was yete in erthe lente [3]
For thy wille and thy wykkd mode
Out of oure companye is wente." [4]

The source of this poem was some intermediate version of the prose *Lancelot*, which Malory probably had before him in compiling his last two books. It is not likely that he used the poem itself; "the similarities and occasional coincidences of phraseology which one observes," says the editor of the poem, "are only such as must occur when two writers are following closely the same original." [5] The average amount of closeness between the two may be judged from the following parallel extracts :—

An Armyd knyght be-fore in wente,
And wende launcelot wele to sloo,
Bot launcelot gaffe hym soche A dynte
That to the grounde gonne he go ;
The other All agayne than stente [6] ;
Aftyr hym dorste folowe no moo ;
To the chambyr dore he sprente
And claspid it with barres twoo.

And so anon, there came striding a good knight, a much man and large, and his name was Colgrevance of Gore, and he with a sword strake at Sir Launcelot mightily, and he put aside the stroke, and gave him such a buffet upon the helmet that he fell grovelling dead within the chamber door, and then Sir Launcelot with great might drew that dead knight within the chamber door ; and then Sir Launcelot with the help of the queen and her ladies

[1] If. [2] Burnt. [3] Lent, given.
[4] *Le Morte Arthur*, ll. 1340-1355. [6] Stopped.
[5] Dr Sommer (Introduction to *Morte d'Arthur*) considers, however, that the poem was actually Malory's original, with "suggestions" from the prose *Lancelot*.

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The knyght that launcelot has slayne,
Hys Armoure founde he fayre and bryght,
Hastely he hathe hem ofdrayne[1]
And therin hym-self dight,
"Now, know thou wele, syr Agrawayne,
Thow presons me no more to-Nyght."
Oute than sprange he with mykell mayn,
Hym-selfe a-yenste hem alle to fyght.[2]

was lightly armoured in Sir Colgrevance's armour. And ever stood Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred, crying, Traitor knight, come out of the queen's chamber. Leave your noise, said Sir Launcelot unto Sir Agravaine, ye shall not prison me this night. . . . So then Sir Launcelot set all open the chamber door and mightily and knightly he strode in amongst them, and anon at the first buffet he slew Sir Agravaine, and twelve of his fellows within a little while after he laid them cold to the earth, for there was none of the twelve could stand Sir Launcelot one buffet.[3]

This poem is one of the finer productions of the industrious translators, men without poetic genius of their own, who kept religiously to the beaten track laid down for them by the foreign romancer. The repeated tags[4] and other signs indicate unmistakably the professional rhymer.

The next poem to be quoted belongs to the same class, and is in a ruder alliterative style, being written about the middle of the fourteenth century. This is *Joseph of Arimathea, or the Romance of the Saint Graal*, derived from the *Grand Saint Graal*. The pious, plodding style of the artless translator may be judged from the following lines and compared with the original French prose :—

"Þat tyme Þat Augustus Cesar was Emperour of Rome,
Þis reson bi-gon · Þat I schal now rikenen,[5]

In the time of Augustus Cæsar, the good emperor of Rome, who held the empire for forty-two years and guarded the

[1] Drawn off, doffed.
[2] *Le Morte Arthur*, ll. 1840-1855.
[3] Malory, Bk. XX., chap. iv.—the spelling is modernised.
[4] *E.g.*: Was non so stronge that hym with-stode,
Be he had made A Lytelle Rese (ll. 1860-1861).
Was none so styffe a-ȝeynste hym stode,
Be he had made a lytelle Rese (ll. 1956-1957).
This is a phrase used by the poet to mark out Lancelot.
[5] Rehearse.

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whon god sende an Angel · into Galile,
to A Cite, bi nome · Nazareth I-called,
to A Maiden ful meke · þat Marie was hoten,[1]
And seide, "Blessed beo þou flour feirest of alle!
þe holigost with-Inne þe · schal lenden[2] and lihte[3];
þou schalt beren a Child · schal Ihesu bi hoten."
he chaungede cher and seide · "hou scholde I gon with childe
with-oute felauschupe of mon?" · he bad hire not demayen[4];
"þou schalt be mayden for him · bi-foren and after.
Holliche with-outen wem[5] · wite þou for-soþe."
And heo grauntede þenne · to ben at his grace;
And sone aftur þat gretnede[6] · þat greiþli[7] Mayde.

Whon he wolde ben I-boren · at a Blisful tyme,
he dude Miracles feole[8] þat mony men seiȝen;
þre kynges of þe Est · proly[9] þei comen,
And vche put him in hond · a present ful riche.
Soone Heroudes þe kyng · herde of his burþe;
He lette sle for his sake · selli[10] mony children;
Foure þousend and seue score · was þe summe holden,

world so long in firm peace, at the end of forty-two years after he was crowned, it befell that God sent his angel into a city of Galilee which is called Nazareth, to a maiden who was called Mary. And when the angel came before her he said, "God save thee, Mary, full of grace, God be in thy company. Thou art blessed above all other women, and the fruit of thy womb is blessed." When the maiden heard these words she was greatly astonished, and began to wonder what could be the meaning of this salutation. And the angel said to her, "Mary, be not confounded, for the Lord of heaven hath regarded thee, and given thee his grace. Know that thou wilt conceive and bring forth a son, who shall be called Jesus. This child shall be of very great puissance, for he will be the son of God." And the maiden answered, "Fair sir, how can this come to pass? I have never known a man carnally." And the angel said to her, "Mary, the Holy Spirit will descend in thee, and the goodness of the high God will cast its shadow within thy body." And the maiden answered the angel, "May God our Father perform his will with me as with his handmaid, for I am prepared to do his will and his pleasure." And when she had said this, the Holy Spirit

[1] Called, hyght.
[2] Come, arrive.
[3] Alight.
[4] Be dismayed.
[5] Spot, blemish.
[6] Became great with child.
[7] Excellent.
[8] Many.
[9] Eagerly.
[10] Very.

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Þat weore I-slawe for his sake ·
for certeyn hit telles ;
Bote þorw3 [1] þe grace of
him-self · gete him heo he
mi3t.
His Mooder ay with him fleih ·
forþ in-to Egipte.
Whon he com in-to þe lond ·
leeue [2] þou forsoþe,
feole temples þer-inne · tulten [3]
to þe eorþe,
for heore false ymages · þat þei
on leeueden,
Do a-wei þi Maumetes [4] ·
þei han trayed [5] þe ofte ;
Let breken hem a-two · and
bren hem al to pouder,
Schaltou neuer gete grace ·
þorw3 none suche goddes."
þenne seis þe kyng, "my wit
mai not leeue." [6]

descended within her, and she conceived ; and when she had carried the fruit of her womb until the appointed time, she brought forth a lad, who was called Jesus, as the angel had said. This child was of such majesty and of such great might, that three kings of the east came to worship him the third day of his nativity ; and they brought each one the most precious thing they could find in all the earth. And they never had any guidance or manner of knowing the way, but only a star that appeared as soon as he was born, and it had never been seen before. And when Herod, who was king of Judæa, knew that such a child was born, who would be king of the Jews, he was in fear lest he should disinherit him ; so he caused to be slain all the infants of two years and a half downwards, so that there were slain a hundred and forty thousand ; and in this way Herod thought he had avenged him on the child. But the high Lord who hath power over all things knew well his evil thought, and guarded him himself from the hands of the murderers so that they could not get him into their power. Then the young virgin, his mother, carried him into Egypt, and sojourned there until after the death of Herod, by the advice

[1] Through. [2] Believe. [3] Fell, tilted over.
[4] Idols (from Mahomet). [5] Betrayed.
[6] *Joseph of Arimathie, or the Romance of the Seint Graal*, alliterative poem c. 1350, ed. from Vernon MS., Oxford, by W. W. Skeat (E.E.T.S.), 1871, ll. 75-108.

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> of an angel. And when he was carried into Egypt, and began to enter into the land, he gave such great tokens of his coming that there was not a temple in all the land of Egypt wherein no image fell to the ground, breaking all such as were therein.[1]

A Scots poem, *Lancelot of the Laik*, written about 1490-1500, is more interesting as an attempt to turn prose into poetry, its original being a portion of the gigantic French *Lancelot*. It shows how little the matter, the style, or the spirit of the stories altered in their passage from metre into prose and back again into metre. Now and then the versifier gave a rein to imagination in the battles and pageants, or was carried by the swing of the metre into lyrical tirades ; there is a more dramatic curtness in the dialogue, and the explication of plot and motive, which the prose romancer is inclined to elaborate, is much abridged. But there is little heightening, except in the Chaucerian overtures to the successive books or cantos. Taken as a whole, this last mediæval specimen of Arthurian romance shows the same fidelity to tradition, the same respect for authority. It also illustrates that the intrinsic differences between metrical and prose romance were purely formal ; the same literary canons governed each.

The French prose says simply that King Arthur was at Carlisle; the poem takes twenty verses to tell how "When Titan with his lusty heat had made his Court for twenty days in Aries, and all with divers hues had apparelled the fields and branches . . . in this time the worthy conqueror, Arthur, who had the flower of all the chivalry of this world pertaining to his crown, so passing were his knights in renown, was at Carlisle, etc." Then the prose records that the king went one morning early into the woods to hunt. This the verse expands into ten lines describing the hunt. In another place the French says : " Et quant il fut entre en la bataille il fist sonner ses busines tant que tout en retentissoit." This the Scots turns into :

[1] For the French original see Appendix C to this chapter.

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Wp goith the trumpetis, and the claryownis,
Hornys, bugillis blawing furth thar sownis,
That al the cuntre resownit hath about ;
Than Arthuris folk var in dispar and dout,
That hard the noys, and saw the multitud,
Of fresch folk ; thai cam as thai war wod.

The Black Knight says : " Seigneurs, vous estes tous amys du roy. Or y ferra comment vous le ferez." This is the sole foundation for thirty-one lines in the Scots poem, including a response from his followers that is not in the prose. The Scot uses his material freely, translating faithfully when a mere pedestrian course was sufficient, letting himself go when his imagination was aroused. He is more vivid and circumstantial in narrative, fuller and more sensuous in description. Take the following :—French : " Et fut a leur venue le chevalier noir mis a terre ; Et aussi les six compaignons qui toute jour avoyent este pres de luy " ; Scots :

The blak knyght is born on to the ground,
His horse hyme fallith, that fellith dethis wound.
The vi falowis, that falowith hyme al day,
Sich was the press, that to the erth go thay.

A good deal of this expansion is obviously necessitated by the demands of metre and rhyme.

The indefatigable Herry Lovelich, skinner, who translated the elephantine *Grand Saint Graal* into jog-trot couplets, perhaps because parchment was cheap, also turned the overgrown romance of *Merlin* into a wooden kind of verse, of which a sample is given below, side by side with the corresponding passage in the English prose version. This relates the famous incident of the sword, drawn out by the boy Arthur from the anvil in which it was fixed, the fore-ordained test that was to designate the future king :

So whanne this Feste tho comen was,
The peple Gan semblen jn-to that plas,
and hit assaieden there Everychon,
but of al that peple was there not on
That theswerd there owt taken Myhte;
hit was the lasse wondyr : they hadden non Rhyte.

and by that tyme men of ferther contrees myght come to assaye the auenture. And the archebisshop hem graunted. Then come oute of euery contree, and asseyde who that wolde. And whan

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Thanne Seyde the Bysschope anon Ryht to hem alle :
"Now knowen 3e what Ryht to 3ow doth falle,
therford welen we now assayen Goddis wylle."
And anon to arthewr he seyde vntylle :
"Go forth now, Arthewr, My child so dere,
To schewen what God wyl don for the here ;
and 3if he wyle that thou here Lord be,
the Swerd go take owt, now let se !"
Thanne wente forth arthewr Ryht anone,
and that Swerd pulde owt thussone,
and as lyhtly took hit jn-to his hand,
as thowgh non thyng hyt hadde withstand,
and took hyt to therchebisschope anon Ryht,
Thankynge only God of his grete Myht.
Therchebisschope and the clergyes alle
beheldyn how this kas be-gan to falle.
They wepten alle for joye jn that place,
and only thankyd God of his grete Grace.
Thanne axede the Bysschope hem in vyrown[1] :
"which of 3ow May Contraryen this Elecciown ?"[2]
they hadden assaied, the archebisshop seide,
"Arthur, yef it be plesir to oure lorde Ihesu criste that thow be kynge, go forth and brynge that swerde." And Arthur yede to the swerde, and toke it oute as lyghtly as nothinge hadde it holden. Whan the prelates and the comen peple saugh this, thei ganne to wepe for ioye and pite, and seiden, "Sirs, is ther yet eny man that seith a-gein this eleccion ?"

Another passage from the English *Merlin* proves the compass of this very simple and indeed very rudimentary prose, and also shows that there were scenes in the prose romances having more of the essence of poetry than the circumscribed imagination of

[1] Around (French *environ*).
[2] *Merlin*, ed. H. B. Wheatley, vi., pp. 103-104.

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Chrétien's followers could ever attain. It is the last act in the life of Merlin, an episode of which both Malory and Tennyson gave very inferior versions :

Whan Blase vnderstode Merlin, he was full of sorowe, and seide, "Dere frende, seth it is so that ye may not departe cometh not ther." "Me be-houeth for to go," quod Merlin, "for so haue I made her couenaunt, and also I am so supprised with hir love, that I may me not with-drawen ; and I haue her taught and lerned all the witte and connynge that she can, and yet shall she lerne more, for I may not hir with-sein ne it disturue." Than departed Merlin from Blase, and in litill space com to his love, that grete ioye of hym made and he of hir, and dwelled to-geder longe tyme ; and euer she enquered of his craftes, and he hir taught and lerned so moche that after he was holden a fooll and yet is, and she hem well vndirstode and put hem in writinge, as she that was well expert in the vij artes. Whan that he hadde hir taught all that she cowde aske, she be-thought hir how she myght hym with-holde for euer more ; than be-gan she to glose Merlin more than euer she hadde do euer be-forn, and seide, "Sir, yet can I not oon thinge that I wolde fain lerne, and ther-fore I pray you that ye wolde me enforme" ; and Merlin that well knewe her entent, seid, "Madame, what thinge is that ?" "Sir," quod she, "I wolde fain lerne how I myght oon shet in a tour with-outen walles, or with-oute eny closure be enchauntement, so that neuer he sholden go oute with-outen my licence" ; and whan Merlin it herde he bowed down the heed and be-gan to sigh, and she it a-parceived, she asked whi he sighed. "Madame," seide Merlin, "I shall telle yow ; I knowe well what ye thinke, and that ye will me with-holde, and I am so supprised with love that me be-houeth to do youre plesier" ; and than she caste hir armes a-boute his nekke and hym kiste, and seide, "that wele he ought to be hirs seth that she was all his ; ye knowe wele that the grete love that I haue to you hath made me forsake alle other for to haue yow in myn armes nyght and day, and ye be my thought and my desire for with-oute yow haue I neither ioye ne welthe. In you haue I sette all my hope, and I a-bide noon other ioye but of yow, and seth that I loue you, and also ye love me, is not right than that ye do my volunte and I yours." "Certes, yesse," seide Merlin, "now sey than what ye will." "I will," quod she, "ye teche me a place feire and couenable, that I myght enclose by art in soche wise that neuer myght be vn-don, and we shull be ther, ye and I in ioye and disport whan that yow liketh." "Madame," seide Merlin, "that shall I well do." "Sir," quod she, "I will not

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that ye it make, but lerne it to me that I may it do, and I shall make it than more at my volunte." "Well," seide Merlin, "I will do your plesire." Than he be-gan to devise the crafte vnto hir, and she it wrote all that he seide; and whan hadde alle devised, the damesell hadde grete ioye in herte, and he hir loved more and more, and she shewed hym feirer chere than be-forn; and so thei soiourned to-geder longe tyme, till it fill on a day that thei wente thourgh the foreste hande in hande, devisinge and disportinge, and this was in the foreste of brochelonde, and fonde a bussh that was feire and high of white hawthorne full of floures, and ther thei satte in the shadowe; and Merlin leide his heed in the damesels lappe, and she be-gan to taste softly till he fell on slepe; and whan she felt that he was on slepe she a-roos softly, and made a cerne with hir wymple all a-boute the bussh and all a-boute Merlin, and be-gan hir enchauntementz soche as Merlin hadde hir taught, and made the cerne ix tymes, and ix tymes hir enchauntementes; and after that she wente and satte down by hym and leide his heed in hir lappe, and hilde hym ther till he dide a-wake; and than he loked a-boute hym, and hym semed he was in the feirest tour of the worlde, and the moste stronge, and fonde hym leide in the feirest place that euer he lay be-forn; and than he seide to the damesell, "Lady, thou hast me disceived, but yef ye will a-bide with me, for noon but ye may vn-do this enchauntements"; and she seide, "Feire swete frende, I shall often tymes go oute, and ye shull haue me in youre armes, and I yow; and fro hens-forth shull ye do alle youre plesier"; and she hym hilde wele couenaunt, ffor fewe hours ther were of the nyght ne of the day but she was with hym. Ne neuer after com Merlin oute of that fortresse that she hadde hym in sette; but she wente in and oute whan she wolde.[1]

The English *Merlin*, it must be confessed, is not all like that; but it has many moving scenes, and its superiority to the mere versifications of prose romance done by Lovelich and his congeners is absolute.

Malory's "Morte Darthur"

Malory made no mistake when he employed a still finer form of the same kind of prose for his reduction of the best portions, or what he considered such, of the now moribund literature into a single book. The back of his task had really been broken for him by a succession of labourers upon the vulgate versions, especially by that master of dramatic story-telling, the author of the *Mort Artus*; yet there was something to add and much to omit before

[1] *Merlin*, xxxiii., pp. 679-681.

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the vast miscellany of stories could be told as one having any kind of unity and coherence. Having been brought up on Tennyson's *Idylls* and Malory's own book, we moderns are too apt to think of the Arthurian matter as a single great complex legend, to talk as if the Middle Ages had an Arthuriad. With this preconception in our minds, Malory's book seems at first sight anything but well designed or well-knit, but exceedingly rambling and inconsequent. Yet if we remember that the Middle Ages had no Arthuriad, but only an enormous congeries of legends, detached, inconsistent, contradictory, and very difficult to reconcile and harmonise, then Malory's achievement in fusing them into one long story with a beginning and end, and a plot binding all into an integral whole, will appear in its true light. He was not fully successful; there are flaws in the workmanship, weaknesses in the fabric, and many of the tales are inferior to the best versions current in his time; but if he fell short of perfection he came nearest of any before or since.

Malory's method of reduction

He is stated by Caxton, who printed the work in 1485, to have "reduced" it from certain French books; and his editor, Dr Sommer, has demonstrated in his studies on Malory's sources that the reduction actually resulted in diminishing the aggregate bulk of his materials, much of which, of course, overlapped, to about one-tenth. These sources have been already indicated. The vulgate versions—that is to say, the *Merlin*, the great prose *Lancelot*, and the prose *Tristan*—were his three main originals, but the actual texts which he had before him are still largely a matter of conjecture. He certainly used not only various French recensions but also some English works, such as the alliterative *Morte Arthure*. Malory does not seem to have invented any adventures, though he added detail, and no doubt often gave his own interpretation of character and motive, throwing over all the charm of his own fine temper and grace of style.

His attempt at a unification of the cyclic stories

The unity consisted, first, in planning the story as an account of "the birth, life and acts of King Arthur and his noble knights of the Round Table," as his sub-title sets it forth; then in centring the main action in the conflict of two principal motives, the consuming passion of Lancelot and Guenevere, disloyalty sapping the great brotherhood at the core, and the high and holy quest of the Grail; and finally in a pervading sense of the inner conflict of

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duty and aspiration with the lusts of the flesh, impairing the integrity and the manhood, not only of Lancelot, but also of Arthur and the major part of his high-aspiring knights. In the first book there are premonitions of the fatal end.[1] Merlin, first as a child of fourteen and then as an old man of fourscore years of age, confronts the king and tells him: "Ye have done a thing late that God is displeased with you, and your sister shall have a child that shall destroy you and all the knights of your realm." The child is Modred, begotten unwittingly but viciously on his sister. In one of the barbarous actions that mar the specious splendour of his reign Arthur has all the children born on the date of the unnamed infant's birth sent to sea and wrecked. Modred is among them; but fate cannot be averted; he is cast ashore and saved to fulfil his mission. Again, in the third book, Merlin cautions the king against espousing Guenevere, since she "was not wholesome for him to take to wife, for he warned her that Lancelot should love her and she him again."[2] Lancelot, for his part, is conscious in his soul of the deadly consequences threatened by his love for the queen; he knows it is through this sin that he cannot hope to achieve the quest, and he grieves for the disasters his treason must well-nigh inevitably bring down upon all that he holds dearest. Through the crime of Modred, fruit of his own sin, Arthur's kingdom founders, and he dies at Modred's hand, seeing the great civilised order that was his life work relapsing into savagery.

Defects of unity

Into this main scheme the multifarious careers of Tristan, Gawain, Lancelot, and the rest are fitted with as much subordination to the principal theme as could be contrived. There are many inconsistencies and incoherences, some contradictions and lapses of memory. Only the too-observant reader, however, will be troubled by the fact that Lancelot when he falls in love with Guenevere is a mere stripling and she in ripe middle age. Few will be able to enumerate how many knights continue to act their part upon earth after their demise has been recorded. Chronology and precise topography are beside the mark in reading Malory. A more serious defect is inconsistency of character-drawing, such as in the various appearances of Gawain.[3] Scholars alone will be puzzled by the confusion of the Beaumayns story in Book VII. with the

[1] Chap. xviii. [2] Chap. i. [3] See *supra*, p. 152.

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legend of Yvain and the Lady of the Fountain and of Renaud de Beaujeu's Fair Unknown. There remains the question of the inferior versions which Malory, and after him Tennyson, chose to adopt of well-known stories. To name only two : the death of Merlin as related in Book IV. is a poor affair in comparison with earlier and later variants ; and the tragic history of Tristan and Iseult is almost ruined in the books devoted to this and other matters. This may have been accidental, but it may have been the result of careful calculation. Had the great love story been treated with the dignity and given the prominence to which it was properly entitled, it would have competed with, or even overshadowed, the other story of Lancelot and Guenevere, on which the plot was intended to hinge ; interest would have been focused in two centres, to the detriment of unity.

Development towards the future novel

The *Morte Darthur* is not a novel, but it shows a distinct advance towards the future novel. Attention is turned, more than in any of the antecedent stories that went to its making, upon the inner world of character and motive. Especially is this so after the coming of the Grail ; from that point onwards the characters are more firmly and distinctly limned, and the causation of events depends more intimately upon the conduct of the actors. Chaucer, a century before, had in *Troilus and Cressida* shown how a novel ought to be constructed. But it is one thing to make a novel out of a simple story and quite another to do so out of a whole library of stories, any single one of which would have served the purpose better. The stories were heterogeneous in nature and subject, and Malory did not succeed in leaving the greater number of them anything less than heterogeneous. The framework of the cycle, as his predecessors had gradually built it up and as Malory buttressed and strengthened it, was an ethical framework. It was based on the idea of a supreme effort towards the highest. But there was an inherent discrepancy between the lofty religious idealism of the modernised legends and the wantonness of the stories inherited from the age of courtly love. Whoever first introduced the saintly Galahad as knight of the Grail, in place of the erring Lancelot, put his finger on this radical flaw and so tried to evade its consequences. In the final form of the cycle, as represented by Malory's version, the problem is treated in a more artistic fashion. The discrepancy

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becomes the basis of a moral conflict; the Lancelot-Guenevere-Grail tragedy is worked out to its proper catharsis. But the other stories, all having the same flaw, had to be left as they were: Malory failed to harmonise them with the central motive. He moralised the sins of Lancelot and Guenevere, as some of his predecessors had moralised the story of Tristan and Iseult, a similar conflict of passion and duty. In order not to duplicate the main action Malory had to leave this story unmoralised, meaningless and ugly, the most discordant portion of his book, as it is of Tennyson's *Idylls*.

Examples of the process of reduction

Only two further quotations need be given as examples of the mode of reduction pursued. They are from "The Prophecies of Merlin," represented by two fragmentary manuscripts in the British Museum. The first is from the adventures of Alysaunder the Orphelyn, and the second is part of the description of the great tournament of Galahalt of Surluse, both from Book X.:

Thenne Quene Morgan le fay serched his woundes/ and gaf such an oynement vnto hym that he shold haue dyed / And on the morne whanne she came to hym he complayned hym sore / And thenne she put other oynements vpon hym / And thenne he was out of his payne / Thenne cam the damoysel of the Castel and said vnto Morgan le fay / I pray yow helpe me that this Knyghte myghte wedde me / for he hath wonne me with his handes / ye shalle see said Morgan le fay what I shalle saye / Thenne Morgan le fay wente vnto Alysander and bad in ony wyse that he sholde refuse this lady and she desyre to wedde yow / for she is not

And when he was taken into a chamber, Morgain set herself to cure his wounds after the hauberk had been taken off his back. And know forsooth that he had fifteen wounds between small and great, and one of them was very dangerous and very formidable to cure: nevertheless Morgain said she would certainly cure him. Then she bound up his wounds very well, but she put upon them such an ointment instead that it made him far worse, so that he was in mortal agony that night. Next morning Morgain came early and wished him good day, and he said to her, "Lady, I thought I should never see this day; verily I have suffered so this night that I believe I shall never see another." "No," said Morgain, "what is this you say?" And so she unbandaged him, and when he was unbound she spoke and said, "Alixandre, fair sweet friend, if I make you forget every ill and every pang, what reward will you

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for yow / Soo the damoysel came and desyred of hym maryage / damoysel sayd Orphelyn I thanke yow but as yet I caste me not to marye in this countrey / Syre she said sythen ye will not mary me / I pray yow in soo moche as ye haue wonne me that ye wyl gyve me to a Knyghte of this countrey that hath ben my frende / and loued me many yeres / with all my herte said Alysander I wylle assente therto / Thenne was the Knyȝte sente for / his name was Geryne le grose / [1]

give me?" And he answered and said, "Whatever I have in the world and whatever I can." "Swear me this as a knight," said Morgain, and Alixandre swore it forthwith. And so Morgain put upon his wounds such an ointment and one so precious that all his pain was driven away. "Lady," said he then, "you have cured me." "I am rejoiced therefor," said she. In fine, the damsel of the castle treated him so well and had him so well attended that no sick man could ever have fared better. And when she saw that he was on the way to recovery she was as pleased and joyful as anybody could be.

It happened one day that she took Morgain by the hand and led her apart and said, "Lady, I pray you in recompense for all that you do so much for love of me that Alixandre take me to wife." And when Morgain heard this, she answered and said, as one that would be without blame of the issue, "Damsel, come before him, and hear how I will entreat him for you," and so takes her to Alixandre's bedside. But she had strictly charged him on no account to take the damsel of the castle to wife, and Alixandre had sworn to her that he would not do so. Now when they were at the bedside, Morgain spoke and said: "Alixandre, as soon as you are well, I would that you take to wife such a fair damsel as this here, and I pray you with all entreaties that you will in no manner refuse one whom you have gained and who will love you well." "Lady," said Alixandre, "one may ill grant what is not one's own. Know verily that I am not my own

[1] Sommer's Malory, Bk. X., chap. xxxvii., p. 473.

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master to grant that which you require of me, and let it not grieve you that she must seek elsewhere what she fails to obtain from me." When the damsel heard this she cast down her head and was for a long space in thought. Nevertheless, she replied at length and said, "Sir Knight, since I have failed of you, do as the custom requires." "And what does the custom require?" said Alixandre. "The custom requires that you give me to another knight." "Very gladly will I do so," said Alixandre; "to-morrow I will give you one."

Those of the castle were in great joy and festivity on account of their lady who was to be married, and of the death of Malagrim their evil neighbour. And when the damsel had gone, Alixandre called Morgain and said, "Lady, which shall we give to the damsel?" And she answered and said, that she would learn it from her own self. Then Morgain went into the chamber where the damsel was and said, "Tell me to whom do you wish that Alixandre shall give you?" "I wish," said she, "to be given to a knight of this country who is called Guerin the Gros." "Since you wish it," said Morgain, "you shall have him." [1]

Whanne sire Mellegaunt that was sone vnto kyng Bagdemagus saw how sir Launcelot ferd / he merueiled gretely / And whan he vnderstood that it was he / he wyst wel that he was desguysed for his sake / Thenne sire Malegeaunt prayd a

When Meleagant saw the marvels that he performed, he knew forthwith that he was Lancelot du Lac, and that it was to deceive him he had changed his armour. He had that day stricken no blow either with lance or with sword, since he had always been looking out for Lancelot du Lac in the midst of the tournament; and now he perceives that this is he. Now

[1] For original (from Sommer's Malory) see Appendix D at end of this chapter.

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Knyghte to slee sir launcelots hors outher with suerd or with spere / At that time Kynge Bagdemagus mette wyth a Knyghte that hyght Sauseyse a good knyghte / to whom he sayd / Now fayr Sauseyse encounter with my sone Malegeaunt / and gyve hym large payment / for I wold he were well beten of thy handes that he myghte departe oute of this feld / And thenne sir Sauseyse encountred with syre Malegeaunt / and eyther smote other doune / And thēne they fought on fote / and there Sauseyse had wonne syre Malegeaunt / hadde not there come rescowes / [1]

shall I tell ye how he prayed the knights in his meinie to attack the horse of Lancelot, either with lance or sword or by charging into it, with such violence that he may not keep his seat. He pricks his horse with the spurs, spear in rest, and rides against him; but King Bandemagus his father had besought Senses le Hard whom he knew for a good knight that he would not joust with any one in the melly but with his son Meleagant: this Senses had three knights in his company. And when he saw Meleagant in the lists between him and his followers, he let ride against him. Now shall I tell that Meleagant durst not refuse the encounter with Senses de Sorelois lest he should be put to shame and his disloyalty discovered. Then both the knights smote each other on the shields; so violently that willy-nilly they had to avoid their saddles and fall to the ground over their horses' cruppers. And then the other knights came to blows on the one side and the other, and struck each other to the earth many a time and oft. And had it not been for the knights of Gaule who had come to the succour of Meleagant, his resistance would not have availed, but Senses would have carried him off by main force. But they were valiant and hardy knights, and delivered him therefrom, and let him mount him in the midst of the tournament. Then the melly became great and marvellous, for after they had struck with their spears they drew their swords, and laid on one another such weighty [blows] as if they had been mortal enemies.[2]

[1] Sommer's Malory, Bk. X., chap. xli., pp. 479-480.
[2] For original (from Sommer's Malory) see Appendix E at end of this chapter.

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APPENDICES

A.—The Last Parting of Lancelot and Galahad [1]

Apres paskes, al tans nouuel que toutes choses traient a uerdure, et chil oisel cantent parmi le bos lor chans dous et diuers pour le commenchement de la douche saison, et toute teu [2] se trait plus a ioie que en autre tans. En chelui terme lor auint .i. iour a eure de miedi, qu'il arriuerent en l'orelle d'une forest deuant vne crois. et virent issir de la forest .i. chiualer armes de blanches armes, et fu montes mult richement, et menoit a destre .i. cheual blanc. quant il vit la nef ariuee. il vint chele part au plus tost qu'il onques pot. et salua les .ij. chiaulers de par le haut maistre. et dist a galaad. "sire chiaulers, asses aues este auoec uotre pere. issies de chele nef, et montes en vo cheual, et ales la v auenture vous amenra, querant les auentures du roiaume de logres, et menant a chief." et quant il ot cheste auenture, si s'en ceurt a son pere, et le baise mult douchement. et li dist, "biaus dous peres, ie ne sai se ie vous verrai ia mais, a notre seigneur vous commanch, qu'il vous maintinge en son seruiche," et lors commanche li vns et li autres a plourer.

En che que galaad issi de la nef et monta el cheual, si lor dist vne vois. "or pense chascuns del bien faire, car li uns ne verra iamais l'autre, deuant le grant iour espoentable que notres sires rendra a chascun chou qu'il aura deserui, et se sera au iour de iuise." Quant lancelot ot cheste parole, si dist a galaad. "fieus, puis que ie me pach [3] de toi a tous iours mais. prie au haut maistre pour moi, qu'il ne me laist issir de son seruiche." et galaad lui respont, "sire, nule proiere n'i uaut autant comme la uotre, si uous couuienge de vous." si se partierent li vns del autre. si entre galaad en la forest. et le vens se fiert el voile qui ot mult tost eslongie lancelot de la riue. et fu lancelot tous seus fors del cors de la damoisele. si erra mult bien vn mois entir parmi la mer, en tel maniere qu'il dormit mult poi. Ains pria a notre signour mult douchement qu'il en tel lieu le menast v il aucune chose del saint graal peust voir. Au soir, entour mie nuit, lui auint qu'il arriua desous vn chastiel qui mult ert riches et bien seans, et voit vne porte par deuers l'eue qui estoit tous iours ouuerte. car de chele part n'auoient chil de laiens garde. car il i auoient .ij. lyons qui gardoient l'entree en tel maniere que nus n'i puet entrer se parmi aus non, pour quoi nus n'i ose en entrer par chele port.

Chele eure meisme que la nef arriua chel part, luisoit la lune

[1] See p. 166.

[2] *Rein.*

[3] *Part.*

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mult clere, et en ueoit on loing et pres, et maintenant oi vne vois qui dist, " is de chele nef, si entre en chel chastiel v tu trouueras mult grant partie de che que tu quiers, et que tu as tant desire a veoir." et quant il ot che, si cuert tout maintenant a ses armes. ne laissa nule chose qu'il i eust aporte. puis se vient a la porte. si troeue les .ij. lyons, si cuide bien qu'il ne puist passer sans meslee, lors met la main a l'espee et s'aparelle de deffendre. Quant il ot traite l'espee, si regarde contremont, et voit venir vne main qui le feri si durement sour le brach que l'espee lui vola de la main. Lors oi vne vois qui lui dist, " ha : hons de poure foi et de mauvaise creanche, pour quoi te fies tu plus en ta main que en ton creatour. tu ies caitis quant tu quides que tes armes te puissent plus aidier que cil en qui seruiche tu ies."

Lancelot est si esbahis de chele parole, et de la main qui l'ot feru, qu'il chiet a terre tous estourdis, si qu'il ne seit s'il est v iours v nuis. et quant il se dreche, si dist. " ha : biaus peres ihesu crist, vous range grasces de che que vous me daignies reprendre de mes folies, or voi iou bien que vous me tenes a uotre sergant. quant vous me moustres signe de mescreanche." Lors remet l'espee el furre. et dist " que pour lui ne sera ele huimais ostee, ains se mettra en la merchi de notre signour, et s'il lui pleist que ie muire, che sera sauuemens a m'arme. et s'il est ensi que i'en escape, il me sera torne a mult grant hounour." Lors fait le signe de la vraie crois en mi son vis, et se commande a notre signour, et vient as lyons, et s'asient tout maintenant qu'il le voient venir. ne se font samblant de lui mal faire, et il s'en passe parmi aus tous qu'il ne se touchent a lui. et il s'en vient en la maistre rue. et vait contrement le chastiel. car il estoit bien mienuis. si avint si a lancelot qu'il ne trouua qui lui tenist l'estrier, car tout dormoient. si atache son cheual a vn arbre, et vient as degres. et monte tout contrement, tant qu'il vint en la grant sale, et quant il fu a mont, si regard loing et pres, mais il ne voit homme ne feme, dont il se meruelle mult. Car si bien palaîs, ni si noble sale, ne quidast il iamais sans gent. si se pense qu'il ira tant qu'il ara trouue aucunes gens qui lui diront v il est arriues. car il ne set en quel pais il est. tant a ale lancelot qu'il vient a vne chambre dont li huis erent clos et bien freme. et il met la main. et le desfreme tout maintenant. Lors escoute. et ot vne vois qui cantoit tant douchement que che ne samble mie que che soit vois de mortel chose, mais d'esperitel, et si lui estoit auis qu'ele disoit " gloire, et loenge, et hounours, soit a toi, peres de chieus."

Quant lancelot ot che que la vois disoit. si lui atenrois li cuers plus et plus, si s'agenoille deuant la chambre, car il pense que li saint graaus i soit. si dist tout emplorant, " biaus dous peres ihesu crist, se ie onques fis chose qui te pleust. ne m'aies en despit que tu me faches aucune demoustranche de che que ie vois querant."

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Maintenant que lancelot ot che dit, si regarde deuant lui, et voit en la cambre si grant clarte comme se li solaus i fust descendus, et de chele clarte fu la maisons si clere que se tout li chierge du monde i fuissent espris. et quant il voit che, si a si grant desir dont chele grans clertes vient, qu'il en oublie toutes choses. si vient al huis de la chambre, et veut entrer dedens, quant vne vois li dist. "fui : lancelot, n'i entre mie." quant lancelot ot che, si se trait arriere mult dolans, et toutes uoies regarde en la chambre, et voit sour vne table le saint vaissiel couuert d'un vert samit. si voit tout entour lui angeles qui auironnoient le saint veissiel. Si tenoient enchensiers d'argent, et chierges ardans. et li autre tenoient crois et aournemens d'autel, si seruoit chascuns de son mestier, et deuant le saint vaissiel se seoit vns hons vestus a guise de prouuoire, si sambloit qu'il fust el sacrement de la messe. et com il dut leuer corpus domini, si fu auis a lancelot, que desus les mains au preudomme auoit .iij. homes. dont li doit metoient le tiers, par samblant le plus iouene, entre les mains al prouoire. et il le leuoit en haut, si faisoit samblant qu'il le moustrast au pueple. et lancelot regarde si ne s'en esmeruelle pas petit. car il voit que li prestres est si cargies de la figure qu'il tient, qu'il lui est auis que cil qui ot lui sont ne le veullent secourre. Lors a si grant faim d'aler j, qu'il ne lui souuient de la desfence c'on lui auoit faite.

Lors vient al huis boin pas, et dist, "biaus peres ihesu crist, ne me soit tourne a paine ne a dampnation. se ie vois aidier a chel preudonne qui mult grant mestier en a." Lors entre dedens, et s'adreche vers la table d'argent. et quant il vient pres. si sent .i. soufflement de vaut aussi caut, che lui est auis, comme fu, qui le feri el vis. si qu'il sambla qu'il fust tous ars. Lors n'a pooir d'aler auant. comme chil ki a pierdu le pooir del cors. et del oir. et del veir, comme se il fust mors. ne n'a membre dont il aidier se puisse. Lors sent plusours mains qui l'en portent, et quant il l'orent pris a mont et a ual, si le metent hors de la chambre, et le laissent illuec iesir.[1]

B.—The Vision of the Bear and the Dragon [2]

Modernised version of Arthur's vision of the bear and the dragon, in the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, followed by the corresponding passages in Geoffrey of Monmouth, Wace's *Brut* and Layamon, the last accompanied by a literal translation by Layamon's editor :

[1] *La Queste del Saint Graal*, ed. F. J. Furnivall (Roxburghe Club), 1864, pp. 223-227.

[2] See p. 173.

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The king was in a great cog, with a crowd of knights,
In a cabin enclosed, cleanly arrayed ;
Within on a rich bed he rests him a little,
And with the sway of the sea in slumber he fell.
He dreamed of a dragon, dreadful to behold,
That came driving over the deep to drown his people,
Walking out of the western lands,
Wandering wofully o'er the wallowing waves.
His crest and his coil were crimpled all over
And undulous with azure, enamelled full fair :
His shoulders were scaly with shining silver,
His body embossed with bristling points ;
His womb and his wings of wondrous hues,
In marvellous mail he mounted full high.
Whomso he touched he was stricken for ever !
His feet were flourished all in fine sable,
And such a venomous flare flowed from his lips,
That the flood of the flame all one fire seemed !
Then came out of the Orient, over against him,
A black bustious bear above in the clouds,
With every paw as a pillar, and palms full huge,
With pikes full perilous, all pliant they seemed,
Loathsome and loathly his locks and his limbs,
His legs all bent and abhorrently bowed,
Matted immanely, with foaming mouth,
The foulest of figure that ever was formed !
Growling and grinning he gambolled thereafter ;
To battle he bound him with bustious claws :
He rumbled, he roared, that all the earth rocked !
So rudely he raged and rioted himself ![1]

Dum autem innumeris navibus circumseptus, prospero cursu et cum gaudio altum secaret, quasi media hora noctis instante, gravissimus somnus eum intercepit. Sopitus etenim per somnum vidit ursum quendam in aere volantem, cujus murmure tota littora intremebant. Terribilem quoque draconem ab occidente advolare, qui splendore oculorum suorum

Li gent Artur à joie aloient,
Bon vent avoient, bien sigloient,
A mie nuit par mer coroient,
Vers Barbeflue lor cors tenoient ;
Et Artus prist à somillier,
Endormi soi, ne pot vellier.
Vis li fu, là où il dormoit,
Que en haut l'air un ors avoit,
Devers oriant avolant,
Qui mult avoit lait cors et grant,
Mult estoit d'orible façon.
D'autre part avoit un dragon

[1] *Morte Arthure*, ed. E. Brock (E.E.T.S.), ll. 756-785.

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patriam illuminabat. Alterum vero alteri occurrentem miram pugnam committere. Sed praefatum draconem, in ursum saepius irruentem, ignito anhelitu comburere, combustumque in terram prosternere. Expergefactus ergo Arturus adstantibus quod somniaverat indicavit, qui exponentes dicebant, draconem significare ipsum : ursum vero aliquem gigantem, qui cum ipso congrederetur : pugnam autem eorum portendere bellum quod inter ipsos futurum erat : victoriam autem draconis, illam quae ipsi proveniret. At Arturus aliud conjectabat, existimans ob se et imperatorem, talem visionem contigisse. Rubente tandem post cursum noctis aurora, in portum Barbae fluvii applicuerunt. Mox tentoria sua figentes, expectaverunt ibidem insulanos reges, cum provincialibus ducibus venturis.[1]

Qui devers ocidant voloit,
Et de ses eles flambe jetoit ;
De lui et de sa resplendor
Luisoit terre et li mer entor.
Li dragons l'ours envaïssoit
Et il forment se desfendoit ;
Mais li dragons l'ours enversoit,
Et à terre le craventoit.
Quant Artus ot un poi dormi
Del songe qu'il vit s'esperi,
Esvilla soi, si se dreça :
As clers et as Bretons conta
Tot en ordre la vision
Qu'il vit de l'ours et del dragon.
Alquant li ont respondu d'aus
Que li dragons qu'il ot véu
Estoit de lui sénéfiance,
Et li ors estoit demostrance
D'aucuns gaiant qu'il ociroit,
Qui d'estrange terre venroit ;
Li altre d'autre guise esponent,
Nequedant tot à bien li tornent ;
Ains est, dist-il, ce m'est viaire,
La guerre que nous devons faire
Entre moi et l'emperéor,
Mais del tot soit el criator.

A ces paroles ajorna,
Et li solax matin leva.
Al port vinrent assés matin
A Barbeflue, en Costentin.
Isnelement des nés issirent,
Par la contrée s'espandirent ;
Ses gens a Artus atendues
Qui n'erent pas encor venues.[2]

Þer ich lai a sweuete
agan ich forto slepe,
me þuhte þat in þere weolcne
com an wunderlic deor,

"Where I lay in slumber, I gan for to sleep, methought that in the welkin came a marvellous beast, eastward in the sky, and loathsome to the sight ; with lightning and with storm

[1] *Galfr. Monumentensis*, liber x., chap. ii., ed. J. A. Giles in *Scriptores Monastici*, Nutt, 1844, pp. 180-181.

[2] *Roman de Brut*, par Wace, ed., Le Roux de Lincy, Rouen, 1836, tome i., pp. 142-144, ll. 11522-11559.

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æst i þan leofte,
ladlic an sehte ;
wiþ leite mid storme
sturliche wende ;
nis in nare leode
nan swa ladlic beore.
Þa com þer westene,
winden mid þa weolcnen,
a berninge drake,
bur . . . suel . . .
mid his feure he lihte
al þis lond-riche ;
Me þuhte a mire sihzeðe
þat þa sæ gon to berne
of leite and of fure
þa þe drake ferede.
Þes drake and beore
beien to-somne,
radliche sone
to-gadere heo come ;
heo smiten heom togaderen
mid feondliche ræsen ;
slozе of heore hæzene
swulc fur-burondes.
Ofte wæs þe drake buuen
and eft seoððen bineoþen ;
neoðeles a þan ænde
hezen he gon wende,
and he flah dun rihte
mid feondliche ræsen.
and þene beore he ismat,
þat he to þere eorðe iwhat ;
and he þere þene beore ofsloh
and hine lim-mele to-droh.
Þa þat feht wes ido
þe drake azen wende.
Þis sweuen me imette
Þer ich lai and slapte.
Biscopes þis iherden
and boc-ilærede men ;

sternly he advanced ; there is in no land any bear so loathly. Then came there westward, winding with the clouds, a burning dragon ; burghs he swallowed ; with his fire he lighted all this land's realm ; methought in my sight that the sea gan to burn of light and of fire, that the dragon carried. This dragon and the bear, both together, quickly soon together they came ; they smote them together with fierce assaults ; flames flew from their eyes as firebrands ! Oft was the dragon above, and eftsoons beneath ; nevertheless at the end high he gan rise, and he flew down right with fierce assault, and the bear he smote, so that he fell to the earth ; and he there the bear slew, and limbmeal him tore. When the fight was done, the dragon back went. This dream I dreamt, where I lay and slept." The bishops heard this, and book-learned men ; this heard earls, this heard barons ; each by his wit said wisdom, and this dream they interpreted, as to them best seemed. There durst no knight, to evil expound it no whit, lest he should lose his limbs that were dear to him. Forth they gan to voyage exceeding quickly ; the wind stood to them at will, weather best of all ; they had all that to them was need ; to land they came at Barbefleot, at Constantin, therein came a mickle multitude, from all the lands that Arthur had in hand.

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þis iheorden eorles,
þis iherden beornes ;
ælc bi his witte
wisdom sæiden,
þis sweuen aræhten
. . . .
Ne durste þer na cniht,
to ufele ræcchen na wiht,
leoste he sculden leosen
his leomen þat weoren
him deore.
Forð heo gunen liðen
an eouste bilife ;
wind heom stod on wille
selest alre wedere ;
heo hæfden al þat heom
wes neod ;
to londen heo comen at
Barbe-fleot.
To Barbe-fleot at Costen-
tin
þer com muchel moncun
in,
of alle þan londe
þa Arður hafde an honde.[1]

C.—The Nativity [2]

Av tans auguste chesar le boin empereour de Rome qui tint l'empire .Xlij. ans, et garda la terre si longement en ferme pais, au chief de .XXvij. ans apres che qu'il eut este corones, auint que diex enuoia son angele en vne chite de galylee qui eet apielee nazareth, a vne puchiele qui auoit non marie. Et quant li angeles vint deuant li, si li dist, "Diex te saut, marie, plaine de grasce, diex soit en ta compaignie. Tu es benoite deseure toutes autres femes, et li fruis de ton uentre est beneois." Quant la puchele oi la parole, si en fu moult esbahie, et commencha a pourpenser de quel maniere chis salus pooit estre. Et li angeles li dist : "Marie, ne sois de riens esbahie. Car li sires du chiel t'a regardee et dounee sa grasce. Et si saches de uoir, ke tu enchainteras, et si enfanteras .j. fil qui sera

[1] Layamon's *Brut*, ed. by Sir Frederic Madden, 1847, ll. 25582-25644 (vol. iii., pp. 14-17). The quotation is taken from the Cottonian MS., Calig. A. IX. The translation is that given by the editor.

[2] See p. 183.

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apieles ihesus. Chil enfes sera de moult grant poissanche : Car il sera fiex dieu." Et la puchiele respondi : "Biaus sire, comment porra chou auenir ? Ia ne conui iou onques home carnelment." Et li angeles li dist : "Marie, li sains esperis descendera en toi, et la virtus dieu le haut enumbrera dedens ton cors." Et la puchiele respondi al angele : "Diex nostre sire fache son plaisir de mi comme de s'anchiele, car ie sui apparillie a son plaisir et a sa volente." Et maintenant k'ele ot che dit, si descendi li sains esperis dedens li, et si enchainta. Et quant ele ot le fruit porte iusc'a son droit terme, si enfanta .i. vallet qui fu apieles ihesus, ensi com li angeles l'auoit dit. Chil enfes fu de si grant hauteche and de si grant pooir ke troi roi d'orient le vinrent aourer au tresime iour de sa natiuite. Et si aporta cascuns del plus chier auoir qu'il puet trouuer en toute sa terre. Ne onques n'i orent conduit ne auoiement ke seulement vne estoile qui aparut si tost com il fu nes, ne onques mais n'auoit este veue. Et quant herodes (qui estoit roi de iudee) sent ke vns teus enfes estoit nes qui serroit rois des iuis si en eut paour ke il ne le desiretast[1] ; si fist ochire tous les enfans de la terre de bethleem de .ij. ans et demi en aual, Tant qu'il en i eut ochis .c. mille, et .xl. mile ; et en cheste maniere se quida herodes uengier del enfant. Mais li haus sires qui de tout est poissans sauoit bien son mauuais pense, Si garda li son meisme des mains as felons qu'il ne porent auoir de lui ballie. Anchois l'enporta la vierge puchiele sa mere en egypte, et si i demoura iusc' apres la mort herode par l'amonestement d'un angele. Et quant il fu portes en egypte, et il commencha a entrer en la terre, si fist si grant demoustranche de sa venue ke il n'eut temple en toute le terre de egypte dont aucune ymage ne chaist a terre, et debrisoient toutes de teus en i auoit.[2]

D.—Morgan le Fay[3]

Et quant il fu conduit en vne chambre morgain sentremist de ses plaies guerir apres ce que li hauberz li fu oste du dos. Et sachiez certainnement que il auoit .xv. plaies entre petites et granz et si en auoit il vne mout perilleuse et mout redoutable por garir. Et nepourquant morgain dist que mout bien le garira. Et lors il benda mout bien ses plaies. mes aincois li mist de sus tel oignement qui mout lempira dont il fut cele nuit en angoisse de mort. Alendemain vint morgain et li eure bon iour et li dist dame au iour sui ie

[1] Evidently should be *deseritast*, disinherit or dethrone him.
[2] The *Grand Saint Graal*, in F. J. Furnivall's edition in *Seynt Graal or the Sank Ryal*, printed for the Roxburghe Club, 1861-1863.
[3] See p. 194.

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venuz dont ie ne le cuidoie iames veoir. Mes ala nuit veoir ai ge failli si con ie croi iames la nuit ne verrai. Non fet morgain quest ce que vous dites. Dame fet il iai perdu trestout le pooir de mes membres. Et lors le deslia morgain et quant il fut desliez ele parole et dist. Alixandre biaus douz amis se ie vous faz oublier touz max et toute doulour quel loier me donrez vous. Et il respont et dist quan que iai vmonde et quan que ie puis. Creantez le moi coume cheualiers ce dit morgain et alixandre li creante erranment. Et lors li mist morgain de seur ses plaies tel oignement et si precieus que il en chaca de seur lui toute doulour. Dont il dist dame gari mauez. Je en sui liee fet ele. Que vous diroie ie la damoiselle du chastel le fesoit si bel et si bien seruir que nul houme malade ne pourroit iames estre miex. Et quant ele vit que il tournoit a garison ele fu tant liee et tant ioieuse con nule plus.

Un iour auint quele prist morgain par la main et la trest a vne part et li dist. Dame ie vous pri en touz guerredons que vous feites tant pour lamour de moi que alixandre me praingne a fame. Et quant morgain oi ce ele respont et dist coume qui sanz blasme en vouloit estre et dist. damoiselle venez deuant lui et si orroiz coument ie li en proierai. Et lors la moine deuant le lit alixandre. Mes ele li auoit moult bien deffendu que en nule maniere du monde ne preist la damoiselle du chastel afame. Et alixandre la auoit creante que ie ne la prendra. Que vous diroie ie quant eles furent deuant le lit. Lors parole morgain et dist Alixandre or tost du garir que si bele damoiselle con ceste est voeil ie que vous praingniez afame et si uous en pri ie quanque prier vous en puis que vous ne vous en escondisiez en nule maniere du monde que vous lauez chier achetee dont ele vous amera moult. Dame fet alixandre qui na du sien mauueisement puet douner. Sachiez certainement que ie ne sui pas a moi pour otroier ce que vous me requerez ne vous poist pas ce que iendirai illi estuet baer autre part que amoi aele failli. Quant la damoiselle oi ce ele embroncha lateste et fu vne grant piece pensiue. Et nepourquant a chief de piece respont et dist. Sire cheualier puis que iai failli auous tant feites con la coustume requert. Et que en requiert la coustume fet alixandre. La coustume requiert que vous me doingniez a une autre cheualier. Mout volontiers le ferai ie fet alixandre alendemain le vous donrai. Agrant loie et agrant feste furent ceus de leenz de leur dame qui deuois estre mariee. Et de ce que malagrim son mauues voisin estoit ocis. Et quant la demoiselle sen fu alee lors apele alixandre morgain et dist. Dame li quieus donrons nous a la demoiselle et ele respont et dist. quele le ueut sauoir de lui meismes. Lors sen ala morgain en la chambre ou la damoiselle estoit et li dist. Dites moi aqui baez vous que

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alixandre vous doint. Je bee fet ele a vn cheualier de cestui pais que len apele guerin le gros. puis que vous ibaez fet morgain et vous laurois.[1]

E.—Meleagant at the Tourney of Surluse[2]

Quant meleagant vit les merueilles que il fesoit. Il counut crranment que il estoit lancelot du lac. et que pour lui deceuoir auoit il changniees ses armes. il nauoit celui iour feru ne de glaiue ne despee que touz icurz auoit regarde par mi le tournoiement se il veist lancelot du lac. or sest aperceuz que ce est il. Que vous diroie ie il auoit prie les cheualiers de sa baniere que il ferissent enz el cheual Lancelot, ou de glaiue ou despee ou ala trauerse si durement que il neust pooir destre acheual. Il hurte le cheual des esperons son glaiue mis de seur le fautre. et sadresse en contre lui. mes li Rois bandemaguz son pere auoit tant prie sanses li hardiz que il sauoit abon cheualier que il ne ioustast a milui fors que ameleagant son filz. Celui senses auoit aconduire .iij. cheualiers. Et quant il vit meleagant en champ entre lui et ceus que il auoit a conduire. Il lesse courre en contre lui. Que vous diroie ie meleagant ne pot refuser la iouste de sanses de sorelois que trop il seroit tournez agrant viltez et descouuerte fust sa desloiaute. Lors sentrefierent andeuls les cheualiers de seur les escuz. Si durement que voeillent ounon leur estuet voidier les arcons et cheoir aterre de seur les croupes des cheuaus. Et lors sentrefierent les autres cheualiers que dune part que dautre et sentrabatent ala terre souuent et menu. et se ne fussent li cheualier de Gaule qui avec meleagant estoirent venuz. Ja sa deffense ne li eust mestier. que senses ne leust retenu afine force. mes il furent preudomes et hardiz cheualiers si le delieurent dilec et le firent monter en mi le tournoiement. La meslee fu ilec grant et merueilleuse que apres les cox de leur lances trestrent il les espees et sentredounent si granz coume se il fussent anemis mortieus.[3]

[1] "Alysaunder le Orphelyn," from fragmentary MSS. Add. 25434, containing "The Prophecies of Merlin," in the British Museum, quoted by Dr Sommer, *Morte d'Arthur*, vol. iii., p. 309.

[2] See p. 196.

[3] "The Great Tournament of Galahalt of Surluse," from fragmentary MSS. Add. 25434 in the British Museum, quoted in Sommer's Malory, vol. iii., p. 314.

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CHAPTER VII

THE MATTER OF FRANCE

THOUGH the matter of France was not so fertile a subject of English romance as the Arthurian tradition, which had a home source as well as a foreign one, it did in fact bring forth a larger number of English romances or pseudo-historical compilations in prose. The matter of France was Jean Bodel's phrase for the great cycle of Charlemagne and other families of *chansons de geste* loosely connected with it, together with the later *romans d'aventure* which in time supplanted them in popular esteem. Of this enormous mass of literature the oldest extant piece is the *Chanson de Roland*, dating from the eleventh century. This is the archetype of a series of royal or national epics celebrating wars against external foes, which were followed by poems having a feudal theme, strife between unruly barons and the royal power, or among themselves, and then by lays devoted to the exploits and adventures of miscellaneous heroes. The epical afflatus of the original patriotic poetry was soon spent, especially when the trouveres came under the charm of the romantic matter of Britain, a century after the earliest *chansons*.

Former views on the "chansons de geste"

Until the question was reopened by M. Bédier in 1908[1] it was generally held that the extant *chansons de geste* were later versions or rehandlings (*remaniements*) of more ancient poems that have totally disappeared. These earlier poems were described as types of popular epic, spontaneous expressions of the national ardour which inspired the warriors whose deeds were sung. It was a primitive *épopée* directly begotten of the events themselves. Roland and his peers were supposed to have been the heroes of warlike lays during their lifetime, or at all events shortly after their death, the authors being their own companions-in-arms—for this was a time "when

[1] J. Bédier, *Les Légendes épiques : récherches sur la formation des chansons de geste*, 4 vols., 1908-1913.

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the soldier felt himself to be an epic personage, and seemed to hear amid the noise of battle the song proclaiming his glory or dishonour." Even if the anterior age in which the national *épopée* originated did not leave complete poems of the magnitude of the extant *chansons*, it was argued that there must have been handed down a host of ballad histories, lays or *cantilènes* which were afterwards put together to form the full-length epics, just as episodic lays of Arthur and his knights were combined together in the romances.

Flimsiness of their historical basis

These theories, analogous of course to the views of Wolf and Lachmann on the genesis of the Homeric poems and German epic, are now hardly tenable. A very different explanation of the origin of the *chansons de geste*, external and internal evidence corroborating each other, has been grounded by M. Bédier on minute researches into the place-names and the historical and topographical allusions contained in the poems. Their historical basis proves to be as meagre and distorted as that of Arthurian romance. Actual persons did exist corresponding to the principal heroes, but the records of their careers given by the *chansons* are chimerical, while their authentic achievements are for the most part ignored. M. Bédier found the clue to the origin of these poems in the fact that practically all are closely associated with certain pilgrims' ways, certain shrines and other places of popular resort in the Middle Ages.

"Girard de Roussillon"

To take a concrete instance, he points out that one of the most famous *chansons*, *Girard de Roussillon*, is definitely localised in and about the abbeys of Pothières and Vézelay, the former of which adjoins Girard's castle and contains the tombs of himself, his wife Berte, and their son. Girard and Berte founded those abbeys and ten others in the ninth century. They also took to themselves great credit, in a contemporary document which has come down to our own time, for having recovered and deposited in these two churches the relics of certain saints. Vézelay, about the midde of the eleventh century, became celebrated far and wide as the sanctuary enshrining the remains of Mary Magdalene. Thereupon the legend of *Girard de Roussillon* makes its appearance. Having, by a convenient and profitable association of ideas, than which nothing came more easily to the mediæval monk, identified the purveyors of these hallowed relics with their ancient founders, the

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monks of Vézelay felt it incumbent upon them to produce an historical account of Girard and Berte and of their translation of the bones of the Magdalene to their abbey. A suitable legend was speedily provided. In the course of half-a-century four successive narratives explaining the advent of the relics were promulgated by the monks. But the *Vita Girardi*, the extant Latin document reciting the whole pious history, emanated from the abbey of Pothières, the monks of which desired to share in the glory of the tradition and to attract some of the throngs of pilgrims to the tombs of Girard and his countess in their own abbey. Produced, as internal evidence shows, at the beginning of the twelfth century, this monkish chronicle answers in all essential particulars to the story told in the *chanson de geste*, which was the work of the jongleurs who entertained the troops of pilgrims faring along the great routes. As M. Bédier succinctly puts it: "These fictions took the shape of a story of adventure and strife, at once religious and heroic—a *chanson de geste* having the distinctive features of a hagiography, the life of a saint having the distinctive features of a *chanson de geste*. And in the two solitary texts which we possess, the one monastic, the other jongleresque, the inventions of the monks are combined with those of the jongleurs." [1]

The same kind of basis for other "chansons de geste"

In the same way it is proved, by innumerable citations of ancient documents, place-names, maps, and the poems themselves, that substantially all the *chansons de geste* can be traced eventually to the traditions of pious benefactors associated with certain shrines and similar foundations, and to the popular demand for a narrative setting forth in a picturesque style the claims of these sanctuaries upon the devotion of pilgrims. The *chansons* are full of details about the places situated on the road to Compostella, to Cologne, to Rome, and to the Holy Sepulchre. The hinterland of these routes remains a *terra incognita*.[2] The legends in the *chansons* are all localised in the same fashion; some more tardily found a home in these places of pious resort, simply because others previously had been cradled in sanctuaries.[3] Charlemagne would have been astounded to meet the fifteen hundred or two thousand distinguished personages who have been associated with him by the

[1] J. Bédier, *Les Légendes épiques: recherches sur la formation des chansons de geste*, ii. 91-92.

[2] *Ibid.*, iv. 418.

[3] *Ibid.*, iv. 426.

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chansons de geste, and still more to find himself saddled with Twelve Peers, eleven of whom were never his comrades.[1] Many so-called Carolingian epics "are mere chivalric *romans d'aventure* which might as well have been laid at the Court of Arthur or of Alexander."[2] Oliver and Vivien are twelfth-century crusaders dressed in the costume of a past age, for the authors of the *chansons* simply projected their own ideas and feelings into the time of Charlemagne, just as Chrétien de Troyes and the author of the Thornton *Morte Arthure* tried to project theirs into the vague Arthurian past. "The ideas inspiring our *chansons de geste*, even when they seem most historic, are nothing of the kind."[3]

Development similar to that of Arthurian romance

It follows that the epical matter of France, though it reached its maturity before the finest blossoming of the Arthurian literature, had an origin much less remote; although as it declined and grew more romantic very ancient traditions became embedded in it, such as the Teutonic folk-tale of the dwarf Oberon (to be identified with Alberich of the *Nibelungenlied*), who plays the benevolent god in *Huon of Bordeaux*. It is apparent also that the matter of France developed on precisely the same lines as the Arthurian matter developed. Long before anyone thought of putting them into a readable story there were the historical occurrences. Then, after a lapse of time long enough for the facts to be more than half forgotten, the monkish scribes produced their history, based on vague tradition and hearsay, no one knowing for sure whether the king in whose reign the events took place was Charlemagne, or Charles Martel, or Charles the Bald. With the pseudo-history came the romantic poems. More romanticism followed and further distortion of the original facts. And, last of all, utterly fanciful versions, altogether at variance with historical truth, were used in the compilation of the prose romances.

Character of the "chansons de geste"

In tracing the pedigree of prose fiction we shall find the romances immensely more important than the *chansons*; the latter are chiefly of interest as predecessors of the former. But there was no interval of time between them. The *chansons de geste* were still being copiously produced when the *romans d'aventure* began. The romancer borrowed material without scruple from the heroic

[1] J. Bédier, *Les Légendes épiques: recherches sur la formation des chansons de geste*, iv. 400.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*, iv. 401.

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legends, and on the other hand the growing romantic spirit changed profoundly the character of the *chansons*. These, before they began to be corrupted by the taste for novelties, were severely epical in spirit and style. They expressed the stern fighting temper of the feudal era, not the adventurous enthusiasm of the age of chivalry. Love was not among their governing motives. There were no heroines. In the romantic poetry which soon superseded them the resources of rhetorical wit are exhausted in descriptions of the beauty of women, whom the *chansons de geste*, when they mention them at all, dismiss with a single epithet. The *chansons* were written for men; the romances, like the modern novel, were intended in the main for feminine readers. And, as Professor Wilmotte puts it: "On chantait la geste, on lisait le roman." But had the *chansons* anything in them that promised to develop sooner or later into life-like story-telling, not too distant from the prose way of narration; or were they, like most national epics, too lofty, magnificent, and ideal ever to yield a mere earth-stepping progeny? Lofty and ideal the *chansons de geste* undoubtedly were; but though they relate superhuman feats they have nothing to do with a superhuman world. Their heroes tread the soil of France; it is the actual history of France that is supposed to be unfolding before our eyes. The sublimity is in the poetical feeling and heroic passion, not in any imaginative flights of vision. The diction is exalted yet plain. The incidents go on in a markedly straightforward manner, with natural bits of dialogue, natural gesture, and all the life-like touches which belong to a story that is true and told as a piece of well-known history. Clear individual character-drawing there is very little—a lack that gave plausibility to the view that the *chansons* represent the primitive epical or communal spirit, and a state of social consciousness when there was little sense of personality.

Examples of their style

This plainness of diction, which does not preclude the attainment of real grandeur, may be judged from a few lines describing the heroic death of Vivien, in *Aliscans*. This poem celebrated the defeat of Guillaume d'Orange near Arles, in 793, and was formerly supposed to be derived from a poem coeval with the events. The passion of the old trouvere breaks forth lyrically in the long tirade of assonances, the regular metre of the *chansons*, which was gradually superseded by the Alexandrine:

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Li quens Guillaumes voit ses homes morir ;
Forment li poise, mais nes pot garandir.
Viviën kiert, mais ne le puet veïr ;
Quant il nel trueve, le sens quide marir.
Par mautalent va .I. paien ferir ;
Jusqu'es espaules li fis le brant sentir.
Adont commencent Sarrasin a venir,
Tout Aliscans en veïsçies covrir ;
Tel noise mainent, la terre font fremir.
Hardiëment vont les nos envaïr ;
Le veïsiés fier estor esbaudir,
Tant hanste fraindre et tant escu crossir
Et tant hauberc derompre et dessartir,
Tant pié, tant poing, tante teste tolir,
L'un mort sor l'autre trebucier et chaïr.
Plus de .xxm. en veïsiés gesir.
Le cri puet on de .ii. lieues oïr.
Et Viviëns se conbat par aïr
Devers l'Archant, mais pres est de morir,
Par mi ses plaies voit ses boiaus issir
[En .III. lieus ou en .IIII.].[1]

Count William sees his men die, and it grieves him sore, but he cannot save them. He seeks Vivien, but cannot see him ; when he finds him not, he thinks he has lost his senses. In furious wrath he strikes a paynim; right to the shoulders he makes him feel the iron. Then the Saracens began to come on ; you would have seen all Aliscans covered with them : such a din they raise, they make the earth tremble. Stubbornly they come to attack our host : there might you have seen a glorious combat rage, many a spear-shaft shivered, and many a shield clashed, many a corselet burst open and shattered, feet and hands and heads taken off, one upon another stagger and fall dead. More than twenty thousand you might see lying there ; the cries might be heard five leagues away.

And over against Archant, Vivien fights madly ; but he is near to die ; among his wounds he sees his bowels coming out [in three or four places.]

The war-like crash of the assonance and the impressive though monotonous advance of the sharp, brief sentences, the beats of

[1] *Aliscans*, kritischer Text, von E. Wienbeck, etc., Halle, 1903 ; iii., 40-59.

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which are accentuated by alliteration, continue to mark the style in the best of the thirteenth-century *chansons*, in spite of their growing diffuseness. Perhaps it will be said there is not much here that will ever be of much service to romance or novel. But surely plain, straightforward narration such as this, such as many of the romancers and many of the rudimentary novels of a later date conspicuously lacked, was something not entirely negligible. It is a form of verse diction that was an excellent preparation for prose narrative, as was not the case with English epic, from *Beowulf* to Layamon's *Brut*. One more specimen, however, must suffice of what the *chansons* were ; it is from the *Enfances Ogier* (*c.* 1270) of Adenet le Roi, one of the most prolific of the trouveres whose names are known. Here the style is impressive, whilst singularly unadorned, and there is a remarkable handiness in the way dialogue slides in and pushes on events :

Quant paien virent nostre francoise gent
Et l'oriflamme k'ert desploiie au vent,
Dist Danemons : "Chevauchons belement,
Crestiens voi devant nous en present ;
Ce puet on bien veoir certainement,
Car ne sont pas de no contenement ;
Kà les arons moult tost mien escient,
Car Francois sont gent de grant hardiment."
"Naime," dist Charles, "dites vostre talent
De ceste chose tost et apertement,
Vous savez bien à quoi la chose tent :
Bataille arons, ne puet estre autrement."
—"Sire," dist Naimes, "par le cors saint Vincent,
Lor gent ont mise en conroi fierement :
Puisqu'il se tienent devant nous telement,
Je lo qu'à aus brochons isnelement."
—"Naime," dist Charles, "et je bien m'i assent."

When the pagans saw our French folk, and the oriflamme which was unfurled to the wind, said Danemons, "Let us ride well, I see Christians now before us : we can see that for certain, for they are not of our following ; and we shall have them upon us forthwith, methinks, for the French are men of great hardihood."

"Naimes," said Charles, "speak your counsel upon this thing at once and freely ; you well know what is toward. We shall have battle ; it cannot be otherwise." "Sire," said Naimes, "by the body of St Vincent, they have set their folk in array courageously. Since they put themselves

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Après ce mot n'i ot arrestement,
Monjoie escrient, si s'en vont liement.
Charles meismes trestout premierement
Et li dux Naime et Jofrois ensement,
Hues de Troies et Symons de Meulent
Et tout li autre poingnent coumunaument.
Et Sarrazin n'atendirent noient,
Ainz rebrochièrent moult airéement.
A l'assambler i ot grant mariment,
D'escus, de lances si très grant froissement,
Que d'abatus en i ot maint sanglent,
As brans d'acier font grief acointement,
Là veissiez orgueilleus chaplement.
Quant Aloris vit cel charpentement.
N'i vousist estre pour l'or de Bonivent.
Il en apèle Gillebert de Clarvent,
Ses cousins ert, bien le tint à parent.
"Biaus niés," dist il, "pour Dieu alons nous ent,
Li demorers n'est pas á sauvement,
N'i demorroie pour plain .i. val d'argent,
A vie perdre n'a nul recouvrement."
Et cil respont: "Vous parlez sagement."
En fuie torne et sa route ensement,
L'ensaigne el poing s'en fuit honteusement.
Charles le voit, dusques al cuer s'en sent;
Dieu reclama le pere omnipotent:
"Ha, Diex," dist il, "m'ai pas veu souvent
Fuir m'ensaigne, or le voi laidement." [1]

before us so, I counsel that we spur on with speed." "Naimes," said Charles, "and I agree right well."

After this speech there was no tarrying: they cry mountjoy, and advance with glee. Charles himself was ever in the van, and the Duke Naimes, and Jofrois likewise, with Huon of Troyes, and Symon de Meulent, and all the rest spur on together. And the Saracens made no delay, but galloped on most fiercely.

When they came together there was great havoc, great shivering of shields and lances, and of those shattered were many all bloody, for they made sharp acquaintance with iron brands: there might one see a proud combat.

When Aloris saw this slaughter, he would not stay there, not for the wealth of Bonivent. He calls to him Gilbert of Clarvent; he was his cousin, and he held him close kinsman. "Fair nephew," saith he, "for God's sake let us hence; there is no safety in tarrying, nor would I stay here for a valley filled with gold: for losing one's life there is no remedy." And he replied, "You speak

[1] *Les Enfances Ogier*, ll. 784-828.

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wisely." He turns to flight, and his train with him; the standard in his hand, he flees right shamefully. Charles sees it, and feels it to the heart. To God he cried, the father omnipotent. "Ha, God," said he, "not often have I seen my standard flee, but now I behold that foul sight."

Prose redactions and translations into English

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries a large number of the romances based on *chansons de geste*, and of the florid and extravagant romances that were more distantly related to the semi-historical strain, were turned into prose. Of the oldest poem known in which the Alexandrine had supplanted the earlier assonanced measure, the *Voyage de Charlemagne à Jerusalem et à Constantinople* (*c.* 1060), no less than four prose redactions are extant in *Galien* and the elephantine cycle of *Garin de Monglane*. It is an interesting study to compare the divergences from the original due to intermediate *remaniements*. Of the early feudal epics, only a fragment or so is found in English: as a great scholar pointed out, at the time of their flourishing, the classes who could have appreciated such poems in this country were able to read them in the original language. From the latter part of the fourteenth century and throughout the next a number of the newer and inferior *chansons* and romances were translated, at first into metrical versions and later into prose. Several French romances were turned into English by the industry of Caxton, and printed by him during the eighties of the fifteenth century, all from prose compilations derived originally from *chansons de geste*. They are of less importance as literature than as works introducing the matter of France to still wider audiences than had been reached by the minstrels and seggers; they were among the chief popular novels of the period preceding the rise of Elizabethan fiction.

Caxton's "Charles the Grete"

The first of these was printed in 1485, the same year as Malory's *Morte Darthur*, and was entitled impressively, *Charles the Grete: the Lyf of the Noble and Crysten Prynce*, translated from the French

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—that is to say, from the prose *Fierabras*, which was a compilation made partly from the *Speculum Historiale* of Vincent de Beauvais, one of the universal histories current in the Middle Ages, and partly from the *chanson de geste*, *Fierabras*, composed late in the twelfth century and printed in 1478. An English alliterative romance, *Sir Ferumbras* (*c.* 1380) had previously come from this *chanson*, which was probably the central portion, modified and expanded, of a longer poem, *Balan*, that is lost. It was probably from *Balan* also that another popular metrical romance, *The Sowdone of Babylon* (*c.* 1400), had been taken, although there are considerable differences between the two English poems. Caxton followed his originals so punctiliously that at times, as his editor has pointed out, textual difficulties have often to be explained by reference to the French.

His book purports to be a regular life of Charlemagne, and begins with a genealogical account of the early kings of France, but there is scarce anything but fable in it from end to end. After briefly relating how Charles was elected emperor of Rome and delivered the Holy Land from the miscreants, it launches out into the most marvellous events, for which the tradition of a long series of wars with the Saracens supplied the groundwork. The salient episodes are Oliver's fight with the giant Fierabras ; the capture of the Twelve Peers by Balan, the Saracen Amiral or Emir, and their succour at the hand of Balan's daughter Floripas, who afterwards marries Guy of Burgoyne ; the forcing of the wondrous Bridge of Mantrible and the death of Balan ; Charlemagne's conquest of Spain, Roland's duel with the giant Ferragus, Ganelon's treason and the French defeat at Roncesvaux, immortalised by the death of Roland. This brief epitome is enough to show how the original nucleus of the matter of France had become romanticised and amplified into amorphous cycles of adventure based on the legends of individual paladins. Sensation was piled on sensation, prodigious feats and impossible adventures, as in the later excursions of the Alexander fable, took the place of any plausibility ; the Celtic wonder-world supplied all kinds of fantastic machinery ; and when the Crusades brought Western Europe into close contact with the East a new sort of magic and extravagance found its way in from Oriental folk-tales.

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"The Four Sons of Aymon"

Better because more homogeneous as a story, though obviously derived from heterogeneous traditions and put together by many hands, was a romance translated by Caxton and printed in 1489 as *The Right Plesaunt and Goodly Historie of the Foure Sonnes of Aymon.* It was translated from a fifteenth-century prose romance alternatively entitled *Les Quatre Filz Aymon* or *Renaud de Montáuban,* which was an amplified rendering of a *chanson de geste* in Alexandrines, the oldest text of which comes down from the twelfth century. This was an exceedingly popular story in the Middle Ages and has left echoes in every European literature. Local memories of the redoubtable Renaud, who was sixteen feet high, and of his equally formidable horse Bayard, are still current in the Ardennes. Aymon is described as one of Charlemagne's dukes, though the reigning sovereign was actually Charles Martel.[1] His sons revolt from the emperor and set all the French chivalry at defiance, repulsing the greatest paladins from their strongholds and defeating them in the field. Renaud has the temerity to visit Paris, in spite of his outlawry, and wins a horse race on Bayard against Roland himself. Then their wizard cousin Maugis carries off Charlemagne by enchantment. At last, after innumerable exploits, Renaud goes to the Holy Land, performs miracles of prowess against the paynims, renounces the world, and returns to work as a common labourer and perform many miracles at Cologne, where he dies and is reverenced as a saint. Charlemagne is depicted as an evil-tempered and implacable tyrant, openly flouted by the powerful barons, as in most of the extant *chansons*—a sign of their lateness and of the decay of the monarchical power at the time of their composition.

Other prose romances

Two expanded prose versions exist of the thirteenth-century love tale of *Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'Amour*, which had been written in eight-syllabled couplets. This is not connected with the cycle of Charlemagne. It is a sentimental story of a lady incensed by her lover's temerity and afterwards reconciled through admiration of his prowess. Caxton's quaint and unpretending style in his translation, *Blanchardyn and Eglantyne*, is a fair rendering of the prose, which had diverged a long way from the original tenor of

[1] J. Bédier, *Les Légendes épiques*, iv. 238.

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the poem.[1] Another love tale that Caxton printed in 1484, *Paris and Vienne*,[2] was a story of knight-errantry, Catalonian in origin, translated into Provençal about 1430, and into French in 1459 by Pierre de la Sippade, whose version was probably the immediate source of our English romance. It is one of the least affected and least incredible of mediæval stories. Paris is of lower degree than his lady love, "the Daulphyn's daughter of Vyennoys," and when he dares to ask her hand he is repulsed by her parents with threats and ignominy. They marry in secret. Then Paris goes to the East and lives at Babylon disguised as a "Moure," winning the favour of the Soldan, whereby he is in a position when the chance arrives to rescue Vienne's father from captivity in Alexandria and so to win his bride. His Oriental experiences are insipid enough; not so the earlier episodes of his exploits in the guise of an unknown knight—chapters as vivid and natural as *Ivanhoe*.

"*Huon of Bordeaux*"

The most popular of all the romances, *Huon of Bordeaux*, was Englished from one of these prose recensions (1454) by no less a person than Sir John Bourchier, Lord Berners, sometime lord chancellor of England and translator of Froissart. The nucleus was a *chanson de geste* of the thirteenth century; but there were numerous *remaniements*—a process virtually meaning that the work was written over and expanded in the most arbitrary fashion. From 10,000 lines the poem grew to 14,000 in the latter part of the same century, and it was subsequently furnished with various continuations detailing the histories of Huon's kinsfolk and descendants, until it became a nondescript romance of 30,000 lines. Four of the seven continuations were taken over by Berners, then his patience gave out. He probably did the translation soon after completing the Froissart, during the last eight years of his life, while he was deputy of Calais. It was printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1534.

Pruned of its later excrescences, *Huon of Bordeaux* is one of the most delightful tales of fantastic adventure ever written. Grant the fairy king and the magic horn and cup, and the wondrous incidents are not improbable. But the question of improbability never occurs

[1] The only copy known is imperfect. There was a later version, *The Moste Pleasaunt Historye of Blanchardyne and the Faire Lady Eglantine*, by P. T. G[oodwin], 1595; another edition 1597.

[2] Ed. W. C. Hazlitt (Roxburghe Library), 1868.

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to one in reading it, although a piece of real life is daringly blended with pure fantasy. The reason is, partly that the human and the superhuman figures are so well drawn, simply, but with force and clearness; they all speak so truly in character; and partly that the serio-comic tone which Gaston Paris found so charming[1] carries everything off without raising a single doubt or protest. It is a pleasing example of the way in which writers would take an historical or semi-historical legend and fill in the outlines with the marvellous fabling that sophisticated readers craved.

Huon and Gerard, sons of one of Charlemagne's peers, are treacherously waylaid by the king's dissolute son Charlot, whom Huon, not recognising him, slays. This brings down on him the monarch's wrath. His friends intercede; but Huon's death sentence is simply commuted to banishment and a commission that means almost certain death. Thus far the story is an unexaggerated picture of mediæval conditions; but now romance begins, in the style of the popular Arthurian literature, with heavy drafts upon Oriental magic and Teutonic fairy lore. To expiate his crime Huon is sent by royal behest on an absurd errand to Babylon, no less than to pluck the beard, and kiss the daughter, of the Soldan. In the end, after many disasters and tribulations, he performs the impossible task; but his success is solely due to the instrumentality of Oberon, king of the fairies, who takes a fancy to Huon, and in spite of the youth's rashness and self-conceit always shields him in the worst extremity. Oberon and his wondrous horn would have seemed more in place in the forest of Broceliande than beyond the Red Sea; but his native home was Germany. The fairy king announces himself as son of Julius Cæsar and Morgan le Fay, and among the supernatural gifts that he bestows upon the scapegrace Huon is a magic cup or bowl which, if the owner made above it the sign of the cross, immediately provided so much wine that if all men alive or dead were present there would be enough to satisfy their thirst. We are reminded at once of the Celtic cauldrons of plenty and of the Holy Grail. But Gaston Paris was of opinion that the author, whoever he might be, owed little but general ideas to Breton romance, although he himself points out a direct allusion

[1] *Poèmes et Légendes du Moyen-Âge*, Paris, 1900, p. 33.

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to the story of Tristan and Iseult.[1] Evidently the writer drew upon an imagination well stocked with current legend ; but his particular treasure trove was the old Germanic myth of Alberich or Elberich, king of the dwarfs or gnomes, which survived as a local tradition centuries after his time in the Walloon region of Hainault, to which the poet must have been a close neighbour as his language shows traces of the dialect of Artois. The romance of beautiful absurdities reaches its summit in the enchantments of Oberon ; but romance of that sort is not a thing that keeps, and it is a sounder element—human nature—that has given the story and its supernatural hero such a long lease of life. Oberon is a gentleman if ever there was one. Shakespeare recognised him as such, and so did Wieland, who made out of this tale a noble epic of fairyland. Yet Saint-Marc Girardin, who knew the romance only in the prose version of 1454, says of it : "Whether it be a question of depicting the loves of Huon and Esclaramonde, or of giving character and action to supernatural beings, the naïve imagination of the old story-teller surpasses the beauties of Wieland." [2]

First among the characters stands, not the titular hero, but Oberon, whose personal beauty made such amends that he almost forgot his dwarfishness ; Oberon, with his lofty passion for virtue and mingled pity and indignation towards the backslidings of Huon. But there is life-like drawing also in the character of the peppery and stiff-necked Charlemagne ; in the browbeaten peers, with their dignified protests led by their spokesman, the venerable duke Naymes ; in Huon, with his irrepressible French gaiety of spirit and his headstrong neglect of Oberon's warnings against using the magic horn or cup except in the utmost straits ; and in that canny monitor, his faithful henchman Gerames, whose thirty years of Crusoe-life in the land of the Saracens have the makings of a story second only to Huon's. There is capital realism and not bad comedy in such scenes as where Huon's kinsman the abbot and his friend the duke Naymes tell the redoubtable Charlemagne to his face that he is a spiteful bully :

When duke Naymes heard the king say so, he said to all the barons, " Sirs, ye that be here present and have well heard the great

[1] *Poèmes et Légendes du Moyen-Âge*, p. 62.
[2] *Cours de Littérature dramatique*, iii. 235.

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unreasonableness that the king offers to one of our peers the which, as ye know well, it is against right and reason and a thing not to be suffered. But that by cause we know certainly the king is our sovereign lord, we must suffer his pleasure. But from henceforth, since he will use himself and to do things against reason and honour, I will never abide an hour longer with him, but I will depart and never return again into the place whereas such extortion and unreasonableness is used. I will go into my country of Bauier, and let the king do from henceforth as he list." Then all the barons departed with the duke from the king without speaking any word, and so left the king alone in his palace. When the king saw the duke depart and his other lords, he was right sorrowful and in great displeasure, and said to the young knights that were left about him, how that he ought greatly to be annoyed for the death of his son, who was slain so piteously, and also to see how his barons had abandoned him and left him alone. Then he said openly, "I see well I am forced somewhat to follow their wills," and therewith he wept piteously and incontinent marched forth and followed them, and said, "Duke Naymes and all ye my barons, I require you return again, for of force I must grant your desires, though it be against that promise that I made before." Then the duke and all other returned to the palace with the king, who sat down on a bench of gold and his barons about him.

More poetically, truth of human character and the witchery of another world are blended in the episode of the enchanted wood where Huon first meets Oberon, against whose fatal spells he has been warned by Gerames, unnecessarily as the sequel shows. Huon sulkily refuses to answer the friendly greetings of the elf. Oberon, in anger, stirs up a horrible tempest round Huon and his company, with such rain and hail "that it seemed heaven and earth fought together." There appear before them a swift black water, and on the far side of it a castle girt with lofty towers, on every tower a clocher of fine gold. The castle vanishes, and then they see a bridge across the river, with Oberon on the other side conjuring Huon to speak. The fairy monarch blows his horn, which when the company hear they have no power to move, but stand still and begin to sing. A second blast of the horn brings on the scene four hundred armed men, who surround the knights and prepare to slay them, so that Huon, conquered at once by fear and hope, speaks at last to the king, who had after all meant him no

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harm. Oberon shows him that without magic aid the enterprise is impossible, and from this time, save when Huon falls a prey to passion and temptation, he remains his staunch friend and ally. It is in the hero's frequent stumbles from the path of virtue that we get such charming strokes of comedy as Huon's resentful outburst against the too exacting love of truth of his tutelary fay: "Greatly should I hate the crooked dwarf Oberon . . . to do him the more spite I shall tell lies enough from henceforth, I shall not stop for him."

The successive sequels crowd extravagance on extravagance, and the interest of the original story is dissipated in preposterous situations and sentimental frippery. In the first, *La Chanson d'Esclaramonde*, the emperor Raoul lays siege to Bordeaux and tries to seize Huon's duchess, the former princess of Babylon. Her husband goes to the East for succour, has many ridiculous adventures, and returns to save the city and rescue his wife.[1] *La Chanson de Clarisse et Florent* relates the wooing of their daughter Clariet, and is equally affected. *La Chanson d'Ide et Olive* is an unpleasant story of the adventures of Ide, daughter of the latter pair, who disguises herself as a man and is actually married to the daughter of the emperor of Rome. *Le Roman de Croissant* carries the narrative down to the great-grandson of Huon. Berners left the other three sequels alone.

It cannot be said, unfortunately, that the English rendering of Huon is a masterpiece of style; in this later translation Berners fell very far below his Froissart. In Englishing that great book he came little, if at all, short of the richly coloured epical prose of his model. Here Berners went further than Malory in deliberately cultivating the refined simplicity and poetical cadences of the transitional style, while in original composition, as in his prefaces, he carried the development of prose a stage or two beyond; and, as Sir Sidney Lee demonstrated in his edition of *Huon*, he was responsible for the beginnings of euphuism in English, afterwards

[1] Some of these adventures are to be found in the story of Sindbad the Sailor, and are older even than that ancient Arabian tale. The story of Clarisse and Florent is the first part of the famous story of Aucassin and Nicolete, but *quantum mutatus ab illo!* Gerin of Aragon takes the place of Garin de Beaucaire, and the Vicomte d'Aragon that of the Vicomte de Beaucaire (G. Paris, *Poèmes et Légendes du Moyen-Âge*, p. 89).

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elaborated to such a pitch by Lyly and his rivals.[1] In his rendering of *Huon*, however, Berners made little attempt at this heightening of the style, as the following characteristic passage will illustrate. It describes how the love-sick daughter of the king of Babylon constrains Huon to redeem the pledge of affection which she holds that he gave when, in fulfilment of the emperor's despotic command, he kissed her in the presence of her father and his courtiers. For this act he had been cast into prison :

Or vous dirai de la dame
al vis clér,
Qui estoit fille Gaudise
l'amiré.
Ens son lit jut et ne pot
reposer :
Amors le poinst, qui ne le
laist durer.
Elle se liéve, que n'i pot
demorer :
.I. cierge prent, qu'ele ot
fait embraser ;
Vint a le cartre, s'a le
cartrier trové
U se dormoit, par delés .j.
piler ;
Tot bèlement li a les clés
enblé,
L'uis de la cartre a errant
desfremé.
" Hé ! Dix," dist Hues,
" qui me vient viseter ?
Sainte Marie, est il ore
ajorné ? "

Now lett vs leue spekynge of Huon, and speke of the fayre Esclaramonde, daughter to the admyrall. when she saw it was nyght, and she all a lone in her bedde she remembered the frenche knyght who had kyssyd her .iii. tymes in ye presence of her father, and she was in greate sorrow by cause he was sett in presone, and sayd to her selfe, " without he were a knyght of grete enterpryse he wolde neuer haue ben so hardy to haue done as he hath done this day in dyuers maners " wherfore she sayd he was well worthy to be belouyd and socoured then incontynent she rose and made her redy and preuely she toke a torche of wax in her hand and lyghted it, and yssuyd out of her chaumbre as preuely as she coulde : it was abought mydnyght, and euery man was aslepe in the palayes. she went strayte to the prison, and came at so good a tyme that she

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Now will I tell you concerning the lady of the fair countenance, who was daughter to Gaudise the Admiral. She lay in her bed and could not rest ; love tormented her more than she could bear. She rises, for she cannot stay ; she takes a candle and lights it ; she

[1] See also J. Dover Wilson, *John Lyly* (1905), where the reasons for rejecting the theory that euphuism was derived from Guevara are admirably summarised. Berners displayed characteristics undeniably euphuistic before he could possibly have become acquainted with the *Libro Aureo* of Guevara, which he afterwards translated.

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Dist la pucèle : "Mar vous esmaierés,
Hues, biau frére, ensi t'oi jou nommer.
Je sui le fille Gaudise l'amiré.
Que vous baisastes hui matin au disner.
Vo douce alaine m'a si le cuer enblé,
Je vous aim tant que je ne puis durer :
Se vous volés faire ma volenté,
Consel metrai qe serés delivrés."
"Dame," dist Huës,
"laisiés tot çou ester :
Sarrasine estes, je ne vous puis amer.
Je vous baisai, çou est la verités.
Mais je le fis por ma foi aquiter,
Car ensi l'oi a Karlon creanté.
Se devoie estre tos jors emprisonés,
En ceste cartre, tant con porai durer,
Ne quier jou ja a vo car adeser.

found the Jayler aslepe then she stole awaye the keyes, and wente and openyd the prison dore ; and when Huon saw the candel lyght and ye dore of the prison open, he was in grete fere leest they wold take hym out to put hym to dethe, or to do hym sum dyspleasure, then he began to make pytyfull complayntes ; the lady, who could well speke frenche, vnderstode all Huons complantes, and rememberyd his name, bycause the day before she had harde hymselfe shew her father hys name. then she sayd, "Huon, dysmay the not ; I am Esclaramond, doughter to ye Admyrall, whom this day passed, thou dyd kys .iii. tymes in the presence of my father ; if it be so that thou wylt fullfyll my wyll, I shall put to my payne to delyuer the out of prison, for I am so amorouse of thee that euer sen thou dedest kys me I haue had none other thought nor ymagynacyon but onely on the and to brynge the out of ye daunger that thou art in." "Dame," quod Huon, "god rewarde you of the greate curtesaye that ye wold do to me ; but, fayre lady Esclaramond, ye be a sarazyn, and I am crystened. trew it is, in that I dyd kys you, was by

comes to the prison, and has found the gaoler where he slept beside a pillar ; very cleverly has she stolen the keys away from him, and opened the dungeon door forthwith. "Ha, Lord !" says Huon, "who has come to visit me ? Saint Mary ! is it already day ?" The damsel says, "Be not dismayed, Hues, fair brother, so have I heard you called. I am the daughter of Gaudise the Admiral, whom you kissed yestermorn at the banquet. Your sweet breath has so stolen my heart away, that I love you more than I can bear. If you will fulfil my will, I will so counsel that you shall be delivered." "Lady," said Huon, "let all that be : you are a Saracen. I cannot

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"Amis," dist èle, "dont n'en ferés vous èl?"
"Naje, voir, dame, par sainte Carité."
"Par foi," dist èle, "et vous le comperrés."
Le cartrier a erroment apelé:
"Amis," dist èle, "envers moi entendés.
"Je te desfenc, sour les iex a crever,
Que ce François ne doinses qe disner
Desc' a .iij. jours, ce te veul commander."
Et cil a dit: "Dame, a vo volenté."
.Iij. jours tos plains tant le laissa juner.
Au quart jour est Huëlins desperés:
"Hé! las," dist Huës, "il n'est ne pains ne blés:
Or voi ge bien je serai afamés.
Hé! Auberons, pullens nains bocerés,
Cil te maudie qui en crois fu penés!

the commaundement of kyng Charlemayne, who sent me hether, but or elles I had rather to haue bene here in perpetuall pryson than to haue touched eny parte of your flessh or mouthe as long as ye be a saryzyn." "Huon," quod the lady, "sen thou art of that mynd, thou shalt end thy dayes here in preson myserably, nor neuer trust me, for yf I can, I shall cause ye derely to aby the refuce that thou haste made me." Then the lady Esclaramonde departed fro the pryson and came to the Jayler, and awoke hym, and sayed, "frend, I charge the on payne of thy lyfe that to this frenche prisoner within thy kepynge, that these .iii. dayes and .iii. nyghtes thou gyue hym nother mete nor drynke." "Dame," quod the Jayler, "your commaundemente shall be fylfylled." then ye lady for dysplasure wente agayne to her bed ryght pensyue and full of fantesyes and Huon was .iii. dayes and .iii. nyghtes without mete or drynke, and on the .iiii. day he sayd, all wepynge, "A, goode lorde, I see well I muste dye for hungre; I humbly require the to ayde and socoure me, and graunt me the grace

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love you. I kissed you, it is true, but I did it to redeem my pledge, for so had I promised to Charlemagne. Were I to be a captive here all my days, in this dungeon, for as long as I might live, never would I seek to touch your flesh." "Friend," says she, "then will you not do more than this?" "Nay, indeed, lady, by holy Charity." "In faith," says she, "you shall pay for it then." She has called the gaoler forthwith: "Friend," says she, "listen to me. I forbid thee, on pain of having thine eyes torn out, to give this Frenchman aught to eat for three days; this I charge thee." And he said, "Lady, at your will." Three whole days she let him starve. The fourth day poor Huon is in despair. "Alas!" says Huon, "I have neither bread nor meal. Well do I see I shall die of hunger. Ah,

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Por poi de cose m'as or coilli en hé :
Voir, vers ton cors ne fesisse pas tél.
Ne m'en pris garde, se me puis Dix salver,
Quant je menti al premier pont passer.
Sainte Marie, praigne vous en pité ;
Roïne dame, vostre homme secourés,
Que il ne soit honneis ne vergondés ! "
Tout canqe Huës a dit et devisé,
Li damoisèle a trestout escouté.
Vint a le cartre, s'a Huon apielé :
"Vasal," dist èle, "estes vous porpensé ?
Vauriiés faire chou qe j'ai devisé ?
Se me voliés plevir et creanter
Que, se poiiés de çaiens escaper,
Vous m'en merriés o vous en vo regné,

that I consent nor do eny thynge that should be ayenst thy pleasure, or ayenst thy holy law, for ony trybulacyon that can cum to me." Thus this noble Huon complayned all wepynge ; there is no creature that had harde hym but that shuld haue ben parte takers of his greate sorowes.

Thus, as ye haue herd before, Huon complayned peteusly, for he had ben .iii. dayes and .iii. nyghtes without sustenance. ye lady Esclaramonde, who caused it, euery mornynge and euery euenynge came to the prison to here what Huon wold say, and euer she would demaunde Huon yf he were eny other wyse aduysed to answere her or not, and euer she founde hym at one poynte and at the last, when she saw that, then she demaundyd of hym yf she delyueryd hym out of preson yf he would then promyse her to lede her with hym into Fraunce, and to take hyr to his wyf when he cam ther. "yf thou wylt promyse me this," quod she, "thou shalte haue mete and drynke suffycyent at thy pleasure." "Dame," quod Huon, "I promyse you faythfully, though I shulde be for euer dampned

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Oberon, vile misshapen dwarf, may he who suffered on rood curse thee ! for how small a thing hast thou conceived a hatred to me. Truly, I would never have done so much to thee. I had no thought, may God so grant me grace, when I lied in passing the first bridge. Holy Mary, have pity on me ! O lady, succour your vassal, that he be not ashamed or confounded."

Now all that Huon said and uttered the lady has heard every word. She comes to the dungeon and calls Huon. "Vassal," she says, "have you reflected ? Would you do what I proposed ? If you will marry me in your kingdom, by Mahomet, I will require naught else of you. Concede and covenant this, and I will give thee plenty to eat." "Lady," said Huon, "so God grant me grace,

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Par Mahomet, je ne vous queroie él ;
Se chou me veus otroiier et greer,
Je te donrai a mengier a plenté."
"Dame," dist Huës, "si me puist Dix salver,
Se jou devoie tos les jors Diu flamer
Dedens infer, ens la cartre cruél,
Si ferai jou toute vo volenté."
"Par foi," dist èle, "or as tu tu bien parlé :
Par vostre amor queerrai en Damedé." [1]

in hell, I shall do your pleasure, what so euer fall to me thereby." "then know for trouthe," quod the lady, "for the loue of the I wyll become crystened and beleue in the law of our lord Ihesu Cryst as sone as we come in eny place where as it may be." [2]

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though I should burn all the days of God in hell, in the cruel dungeon, yet will I perform all your will." "In faith," said she, "thou hast then spoken well ; for your love will I turn to the Most High."

[1] *Huon of Bordeaux: chanson de geste*, ed. F. Gressard et C. Grandmaison, 1860, ll. 5836-5902.
[2] *Huon of Bordeaux* (E.E.T.S.), pp. 39-40.

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CHAPTER VIII

MISCELLANEOUS ROMANCES

Cycles of antiquity —the matter of Troy

THE cycles of Troy and the Orient may be treated more summarily than those of Britain and of France, for though the apocryphal annals of Dictys and Dares were the source of a vast amount of metrical romance in French, which was served up again in English poems from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, supplying themes for great verse by Chaucer and Lydgate, this comes only indirectly into the history of prose romance. The first book printed in English, Caxton's *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, was translated from a prose compilation, made in 1464 by Raoul le Fèvre, from the Latin prose chronicle of Guido delle Colonne. This pretended history had appeared in 1287, superseding in popular favour the huge poem of Benoît de Sainte-More, the *Roman de Troie* (1165), which had hitherto been accepted as the standard account of the pseudo-Homeric transactions. The Trojan romances of Benoît and his rivals contained many brilliant scenes, and were, unintentionally, a faithful mirror of the times in which they were written. As already pointed out, even the arch-romancer Chrétien de Troyes found it worth while quarrying in these spurious records of old time. Both Guido's and Benoît's works attained immense popularity, were often redacted, and translated into several languages. Caxton's rendering also went into numerous editions. Dictys and Dares were still being printed in the eighteenth century.

The "History of Jason"

Two prose pieces that remained in manuscript require only brief mention. Both are probably epitomes of poems by Lydgate, and were written about the middle of the fifteenth century. One appears to be from his *Troy Book* and consequently derives from Guido delle Colonne. The other is from his *Siege of Thebes*.[1] Of much greater interest, partly because it was the book that gave William Morris the idea of his Chaucerian poem, *The Life and*

[1] Both in Rawlinson Manuscript D 82.

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Death of Jason, is Caxton's *History of Jason*, from the French of Raoul le Fèvre. [1] It was printed not later than 1477, some seven years after his translation of Le Fèvre's *Recueil des Histoires de Troie*, a later book. Caxton's preface gives an account of the Order of the Golden Fleece, established in 1430; but the book itself contains no allusion to the famous Order, wherefore Paulin Paris questioned whether it could have been written after 1430, and whether Le Fèvre was the author, as Caxton states. As might be expected, Jason and Medea are hero and heroine of a romance of chivalric and amorous adventure. As might perhaps not be expected, their love-making and the episodes of jealousy and revenge are handled with a fullness of detail and an insight into the female heart that recall Chaucer's *Troilus and Cressida*, although there is no touch of Chaucerian humour. Was the writer clumsily attempting to rival the master's Troilus and Pandarus in the passage describing Medea's love-sickness?

Whan the Grekissh knightes had seen and conceyued the beaute of this place. they had therof grete meruaile and were moche esbayed and after they entred into the temple. and there made their orisons and syn behelde the composicion and ordonaunces of the ymages that represented the amorous peple al aboute the godesse Venus. and whan they had long seen and beholden all, Medea toke leue of Iason and saide that she wold abide a litil while there. And thenne Iason departed fro the temple and retorned with the Grekes vnto the palais. and the fair Medea abode in the temple moche pensif and in grete payn in so moche that after the departing of the Grekes she knelid doun humbly tofore the representacion of Venus and sayd in this maner, "Ryght soueraine goddesse of louers which holdest all the faites of nature in the domynacion and seignourie I yelde me vnto thy goode mercy. Ha a where may I become for to haue good conceyll, I have required the noble knight Iason of loue or atte lest I haue reueled and shewid to him the secrete of myn herte and of my thought, and with that I haue offrid to saye to him and declare the secrete of the goddes, haue I don euil, I wote neuer, but atte lest I apperceyue clerely that I haue myself to him abandonned and gyuen. Ha a what shame is this, ye verayly and more if he daigneth not to here me, but if I may do somoch that he accorde vnto my will, this shalbe to me the most grettest glorie

[1] See edition by John Munro (E.E.T.S.), 1913. This was printed from William Morris's typewritten copy, which he probably intended to produce at his own Press.

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that may come to ony woman of a noble hous. Ha a right hygh goddes conceyie me, or enseigne and teche me, put your helpe to this werke to your ancell or handmaid, it is now time or neuer."

After this orison abode there the fair Medea as al rauisshed. and was so long ther til the lady that had her in garde cam to her and saide that she taried and made her praiers to long and that it was time to retorne to the palays. Thenne aroos Medea from her contemplacion al esprised of loue as her visage shewid it plainly. and retorned homward. And whan she was comen to the palais, she founde that the king abode for her to go to dyner. but she gaf the king to vnderstonde that she was not wel disposed. and so the king sette him at the table with Iason, the noble Hercules and Theseus and Caliope the seconde doughter. and Medea wente vnto her chambre and many ladies and damoiselles folowed her, how wel she made hem al departe and go out of the chambre. and reteyned non with her reseruid the lady that had the conduyt and charge of her. the which was right sore abasshid of the maintene of Medea. wherfore incontinent as al the women were withdrawen she cam to her and sayd thus. "My dere daughter I haue grete meruaile from whens this maladie is comen to you." "In good faith" ansuered Medea "fair moder. it nedeth nothing to you to meruaile. for ther is no creature what that euer they be, but that they must be subgette to receyue the maladies and sekenes whan they come, and whan the goddes and fortune will send them," "your reson is good" sayd thenne the lady, "but whan the maladies ben comen it behoueth to seche remedie assone as is possible, and therfore telle to me your necessite. and where the sekenes holdeth and greueth you, and I shal aduertise the medicine or phisicien that he shal pourueye for remedie," "A ha fayr moder" said Medea "Late me in pees" "It must nedes be that ye tell me" answerde the lady, "it is auenture" saide Medea. "Wherfore" said the lady "For asmoche as myn infirmite is ouer secrete and for somoch I dar not discouere it" "A ha my dere lady" sayd she thenne, "I suppose that hit ben amourettis. that thus trauaylle yow and I am in doubte that the beaute and the noble vertues of Iason ben cause herof, for I see yow all in other maners thenne ye were wont to be. And if it be so, telle hit to me hardily, for ye be the creature aboue alle other of the world that I loue best, I haue vnto this time, the best wise I coud gouerned and nourisshid you. and for so moche me semeth that ye sholde hyde no thing from me, and if ye be onything smiten with the dart of loue. discouere it unto me. that shalbe vnto your herte grete alegement. for euery person amorous passeth his payn and grefe lightly, whan she findeth to whom she may open her herte and deuise clerely." "My fair moder" sayd thenne Medea

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"I see wel that it behoueth that ye know alle myn affayre. certes verily I am amoureuse of Iason. and so moche that I sholde Ioparde my lyf for him. and in dede I haue required him that he take me to his wyf. and I shal deliuere to him the industrie and teche him how he shal wynne the flees of golde and also adaunte the ferdful bestes of the yle of Colchos."

Whan the lady had vnderstande this that said is. she began to wepe tenderly sayng. "Ha, a dere doughter what haue ye don? I am all dishonoured by you, whan ye go prayng the strange knightes of loue. Ha, a what outrage Certes they shal mocque you, and if it be knowen ye shal neuer be honoured ne called as ye tofore haue ben." "Knowe ye fair moder" ansuerde thenne Medea, "that I haue not don so yll as ye wene. and if I have required the noble knight Iason of loue hit shalbe reputed to me vertu and not shame ne dishonour, for pyte hath constrayned me so to do, for as moche as hit is in me to saue his lyf. and to make hym Retorne with glorie and victorie of his enterprise, and for so moche knowe ye that thenne whan I haue seen so faire and so wel adressid knight that his like shal not be seen in a .M. yere I haue had pite of him, and aboue this loue hath made me enterprise that I haue required him considered many thinges, and that he wolde neuer haue required me. and I have made to him a promesse which I wil holde and entretiene, if he wil ensure me that I shalbe his wyf, for I haue here within by writing the maner howe the goddes wil that the moton or shepe of golde shalbe conquerd. wherfore I require and praye you that ye conceyle me and helpe that by your connyng and conduyte I might gete and draw him to my loue, and that ye wold do somoch for the loue of me, that he haue no souenaunce of ony other lady in the worlde, saue only on me. for it is force that it be so or ellis he be dede and perisshed in the yle of Colchos. where he hath auowed to go and finisshe thende of the right perillous auenture of the moton or flees of gold. And finably that in bewailing and bewepyng his deth I be homicide of him and of myself."

Thenne the lady seeyng Medea to be in this poynt beheld and sawe how she was of a meruaillous and grete corage. and yet she thought that ther might come harme of (hit) if the maide accomplisshid not partye of her desire. and syn brought to her remembraunce. that she might bringe Iason to conquere the moton or flees of golde, and whan she hadde put al these thinges in a balaunce and fiched in her engyn she began to reconforte Medea. and in dede promised her that she sholde do so. (and) that wythout other moyen she sholde enioye the loue of Iason, and it was not long after but she wente to the bedde of Iason, and there made certayne

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coniurisouns and carectes. for she was all expert in alle maners of enchantemens and of sorceries. and whan she had thus don she cam agayn to Medea, and sayd to her that she sholde no more doubte of onything, for from after the time that Iason be leyd and couched in his bedde he sholde neuer loue other woman but her. and so it befelle, for assone as Iason was leyd in his bed at the euen. alle his corage and entendement were rauysshed in thinking on the grete beaute of Medea in suche facion as he might in no wise slepe.[1]

There are curious blunders in the story due to misunderstanding; thus Argo is supposed to be the name of the master of the ship. The mediæval writer could not bring himself to leave his readers weeping, or perhaps he knew they would never stand it; so he actually provides a happy ending, in which course Morris did not follow him. Medea is reduced to the direst misery, and is found by Jason, who has been dethroned, in Thessaly, eating roots and herbage. She humbles herself and begs forgiveness, whereupon her recreant and vengeance-stricken husband pardons her, and they are reunited.

Vpon this conclusion the noble and valiaunt prince Iason putte him on the waye so ferre that he cam in to Thessaille. But that more is. fortune made him entre in to the woode where as Medea hadd long ben and soiourned How well she ete nothing but akehornes and notes. herbes and rootes. And he was constrayned one night to logge him self in the litil logge where Medea abode and made her Residence, And so he founde her on a day in his waye at the sonne goyng doun. Anone as Iason and Medea sawe eche other forthwith they knewe eche other. With that Medea began strongly to wepe. and syn knelid doun on bothe her knees in grete humylitie tofore Iason requiring and cryeng him mercy. Thenne the knight had pyte on her and releued and toke her up by the handes. and syn demanded her if she had ony thing to eat or drink, sayyng that he had honger and that he had not that daye eten ne dronken, Thenne Medea made him sitte vpon the erthe for to rest him a litill. and syn wente and fette hym of the notes akehornes and rootes and other smale fruytes that she had gadred in the wood. and sayde to him that he shold make good cheere with such as he founde. And that syth a certayn tyme that she had ben there, she had eten none other mete.

Whan Iason whiche was a moche vertuous prince had vnder-

[1] William Caxton's translation of the *History of Jason*, 1913, pp. 124-127.

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stonde the lady and knewe her grete pouerte, he began to remembre of the innumerable goode dedes that she had don for him tofore. and how she had for his loue abandonned her fader and her nacion for to goo with him, And also that she was of a noble hous as doughter of a king, he toke her by the hand and saide that he pardonned her of al thing that she had trespaced or mesprised ayenst him. And in feat sayd that his plaisir was that she shulde be his wyf agayn as she had ben tofore, Certes Medea incontinent as she vnderstood the good will of her lord, she was more Ioyous in her corage thenne if he had gyuen to her the beste and the most noble royaume of the worlde. And thenne she sware to him and auowed that she sholde neuer medle more with sortes ne enchantements ne none other malefices ne of ony thing but first he sholde haue the cognoissance and knowlech, and in suche wise she conduysed her self anenst Iason that in that same time they reconcilled hem self to gyder. And on the morn erly Medea abandonned her lytill logge, And wente bothe on their waye. And so ferre erred by their Iourneyes that they cam vnto the court of the king Eson of Myrmidone that was newly comen in his royaume. Thenne the king Eson knowing their reconsiliacion contented him self with Iason in pardonyng him all old Rancour and maletalents, And hit was not long after that the king Eson resigned in the handes of his sone the Royaume of Myrmidone. for the grete loue that he had vnto the fayr Medea as he well shewde. For incontinent that he knewe that she was arryued in his palays. he receyued her the most honourably that was in him possible to doo, And thus the preu Iason and Medea regned and gouerned their Royaume hyely long time, During the whiche they liued to gyder in grete loue and concorde and had many fayr children to gyder that regned after hem of whome I haue founde none historie or sentence. and therfore I shal finisshe this historie in this wise, prayng my fore sayd right redoubted yong lorde and all them that shall rede the contenu of this present volume. or here it red that it may plese them of their grace to excuse me for somoche as my litil and rude engyn hath not conne touche ne comprise the mater no better etc, and here endyth myn auctor his book.[1]

Romances of Alexander

Not much need be added to what was said in the introductory chapter on the mediæval romances of Alexander. These also took on the colour and feature of the period, but they did not convert Alexander himself into a mere knight-errant, or make him a mere foil to other heroes, as befell Arthur and Charlemagne in the British

[1] William Caxton's translation of the *History of Jason*, 1913, pp. 197-198.

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and French romances. He is drawn in large, almost superhuman outlines, as the mighty conqueror, of semi-divine origin, privileged by his surpassing prowess as the greatest of military leaders to enjoy the fortunes of a demigod. The prose *Alexander*, which is contained in the Thornton manuscript, and was translated from Latin into a North Country dialect, happens to be one of the best of the English versions of the story. The first part is gone; but the remnant gives the whole of his career of conquest, with the usual fabulous amplifications, down to his death and funeral.

Other classical and Byzantine influences

Some of the building materials for a number of metrical and prose romances must have come from the Near East. Chrétien's *Cligès*, as already mentioned, brings a tale of the emperor of Constantinople into association with Arthur. Interest in the East as the cradle of the faith, especially when the Crusades brought East and West into continual contact, fostered the introduction into Western romance not only of ecclesiastical legends of the Holy Land, but also of Byzantine plots and incidents from late Greek romance. It has indeed been argued that the change which came over the spirit of romance when the *chansons de geste* were superseded by the *romans d'aventure* was due, more than to anything else, to familiarity with Byzantine fiction and the novels of the decadence in Greek and Latin literature. The *fabliaux*, which were the forerunners of the realistic and very popular *nouvelles*, to be circulated shortly in collections like the *Cento Novelle Antiche*, the *Decameron*, and the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, are full of borrowings from both classical and Oriental sources. Professor Courthope contends even that it was the Greek novel that originally suggested a prose form to the romancers, and believes that Chrétien was so well versed in the novels of Xenophon and Achilles Tatius that he appropriated situations and incidents from their pages for use in *Cligès* and in his Arthurian romances.[1]

"Fulk Fitz Warine"

The next prose romance to be considered is in French; but its subject is English, and the author was, almost certainly, a Shropshire man. A Norman counterpart to the doughty Renaud de Montauban, and, like Barbour's Bruce, a hero compounded of two historical personages, Fulk Fitz Warine is represented as a rebellious

[1] *History of English Poetry*, i. 118; see also pp. 442-443.

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noble in league with the Welsh, and carrying on a guerrilla war successfully against all the forces of the English crown. All that is extant now is the prose narrative, which must have been written before 1320; but this shows unmistakable proofs of transcription from a Norman-French poem in rhyming couplets, which indeed Leland stated that he had in his hands.[1] This hero-saga of feudal England is a story as absorbing, and at its best fully as realistic, as any modern historical novel; the characters are sketched with an incisive pen, and the life and conditions of the time are so well rendered that the book retains its value as historical evidence in spite of the embellishments of the trouvere, and his thefts from *Huon of Bordeaux* and other *romans d'aventure*. The writer's accuracy in describing the neighbourhood of Ludlow Castle and the Welsh border is in itself excellent testimony to his general truthfulness of drawing. Of truth of fact he has more rather than less than the majority of his kind; but, as critics have taken unnecessary pains to demonstrate, this is only the epitome of a romance and not an authentic chronicle.

The story falls into two parts, of which the earlier recites the deeds of Fulk the elder, and centres in the fierce struggle for the possession of Ludlow Castle, belonging to Fulk's guardian, Sir Joce, but treacherously captured by Sir Walter de Lacy. Could there be a more vivid glimpse of those rough times than the episode which tells how Fulk, the young esquire, first proved his manhood? Sir Joce is being overpowered by superior numbers:

[1] *Fulk Fitz Warine*, ed. T. Wright (Warton Club), 1855. A translation has recently appeared in the "King's Classics."

The following among other passages, as Thomas Wright, the first editor, observed, was altered scarcely at all in the process of adaptation:—

"William, quant ce oy, surryst, e dist, 'Bele nece bien avez dit; e je vus ayderay à mon poer de tel seignur purchaser. E si vus dorray Blanche-Tour e quanque apent ou tut l'onour quar femme que ad terre en fée serra d'assez plus desirrée.'"

"William, quant ce oy surrit,
Bele nece, bien avez dit;
E de mon poer vus ayderay
de tel seignur purchaser.
E si vus dorray Blanche-Tour,
E quanque apent ou tut l'onour;
Quar femme que ad terre en fée
Serra d'assez plus desirrée."

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The lady and her daughters in the tower see their lord so pressed that he could hardly endure, and cry, faint, and made great lamentation ; for they never expected to see their lord alive. Fulk Fitz Warine was left in the castle, for he was only eighteen years old, and he heard the cry in the tower, ascended in haste, and saw the lady and all the others crying. He went to Hawyse, and asked what ailed her, and why she made such sorrowful cheer. "Hold your tongue," cried she, "you resemble little your father who is so bold and strong, and you are a coward, and always will be. See you not there my lord, who has cherished you and nursed you affectionately, is in peril of death for want of help? And you, wretch, go up and down unhurt, and care nothing for him." The valet, for the reproof she had given him, was all filled with anger and ire ; and at once he went down from the tower, and found in the hall an old rusty hauberc, and put it on as well as he knew how, and took a great Danish axe in his hand. He came to a stable which was near the postern by which they go towards the river, and found there a cart horse. He now mounted the cart horse, and went out by the postern, and soon passed the river, and came to the field where his lord was struck down from his steed and in point to be killed, if he had not arrived. Fulk had a foul helmet, which almost covered his shoulders. And at his first onset he struck Godard de Bruce, who had seized his lord, with his axe, and cut his backbone in two parts, and remounted his lord. Fulk turned towards Sir Andrew de Preez, and gave him his axe on his helmet of white steel, that he split it all down to the teeth. Sir Arnald de Lys saw well that he could in no manner escape, for he was sorely wounded, and he surrendered to Sir Joce. The Lacy defended himself, but he was soon taken.

Now is sir Walter de Lacy taken and sir Arnald de Lys, and they are led over the river towards the castle of Dinan (Ludlow). Then spoke Sir Joce : "Friend burgess, you are very strong and valiant ; and if it had not been for you I should have been dead before this. I am much bound to you, and shall be always. You shall live with me, and I shall never fail you." Joce thought he had been a burgess, for burgesses really have put armour on, and those which the lad had were rusty and foul. Then the lad answered and said : "Sir, I am no burgess ; but do you not know me? I am Fulk, your foster-child." "Fair son," said he, "blessed be the time that ever I nourished you ! for a brave man will never lose his labour which he does for a brave man."

Hawyse, who rates Fulk so unjustly, afterwards becomes his wife. Meanwhile Ludlow Castle is captured. One of the prisoners

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makes love to a damsel of the castle, and she agrees to let down a ladder of leather for him to visit her after he is set free. He comes in with a hundred men :

They found the watch sleeping, for he seemed to be heavy under the presentiment of death ; and they took him immediately, and would have thrown him from his tower into the deep foss, but he cried for mercy, and begged that they would suffer him to whistle one note before he died. And they granted it him ; but he did it in order that the knights within should be warned. But it was all in vain. While he whistled the greater part of the knights and sergeants were being cut to pieces ; and they screamed and cried in their beds that God would have pity. But the companions of Sir Arnald were without pity ; for all who were therein they put to a foul death, and many a sheet which was white at even was all reddened with blood. At last they threw the watch into the deep foss and broke his neck.[1]

The heedless damsel who let in the enemy knight, when she realises for what vile object her love has been abused, thrusts the traitor through the body with his own sword, naked as he stands, and casts herself from a window into the castle ditch. Nothing grimmer than the terse, stark tragedy of that brief scene in the woman's chamber while her friends were being slaughtered without can be imagined. The writer's fault—an unusual one with the regular trouvere—was to be too terse.

After many vicissitudes Fulk is righted by King Henry ; and the tale runs rapidly over the intervening years to take up the fortunes of his son, the younger Fulk, the true paladin of this romance, if romance it should be called. This sturdy young baron quarrels with King John, and their hostility is fed hot with fresh fuel by the king's licentious advances to the woman Fulk loves. Deeds of heroism, hair-breadth escapes, scenes instinct with dramatic force as well as with the glamour of romance, succeed each other rapidly. Fulk is brought to the verge of destruction more than once ; but strength and courage carry him through, and, like his prototype Renaud, he dies at peace with all men.

[1] This spirited translation is by Thomas Wright (*Fulk Fitz Warine*, pp. 27-31). The French prose romance, *Histoire de Foulques Fitz Warin*, is included in the well-known *Nouvelles Françoises en Prose du XIVe Siècle* (Bibliothèque Elzévirienne, 1858).

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"*Melusyne*"

An ancient folk-tale of an elfin lady married to a knight was made the subject of a long prose romance, *Melusyne*, by a certain Jean d'Arras, between 1382 and 1391, the knight being identified with Raimondin de Lusignan, ancestor of the noble family who gave kings to Cyprus and Jerusalem. The English translation may be compared, greatly to its advantage, with the metrical *Romans of Partenay*, translated from a poem composed about fourteen years later upon the same legend. This is the first meeting of King Elynas with Pressyne, the fairy mother of Melusyne :

It is true that there was somtyme in Albany a kynge that was moche worthy and valyaunt / And as sayth thystory / he had of hys wyf many children / and that Mathas whiche was fader to fflorymond was hys first sone / and this kinge had to name Elynas, and was right worthy and mighty knight of his land. / And it happed that after the decess of his first wyf / as he chaced in a fforest nighe to the see, in the which forest was a moche fayre fontaynne / that sodaynly he had so grett athurst / that as constreyned he tourned and yede toward the said fontaynne. / And whan he approuched to the said fontayne / he herde a voyce that song so melodyously and so swetly / that he suposed none other / but it had the voyce of an Angel / but soone aftir he knewe that hit was the voyce of a woman. Thenne descendid he and alyghted fro hys hors to thende he shulde not make gret affray / and walked fayre and softly toward the fontayn in the most couered wyse that he coude. And whan he camme nygh to the fontayne / he sawe there the fayrest lady that euer he the dayes of hys lyf had seen to his aduys or semynge. Thenne he stode styl al abasshed of the grett beaulte that he perceyued in the same ladye, which euer songe so melodyously and so swetly. And thus he stood styl / asmoche for the bewte of the lady / as for to here her swette and playsaunt voyce / and hyd hym in the best wyse that he coude vnder the leevis of the trees / to thende that the said lady shuld not perceyue hym / and forgate all the chasse and grett thurst that he had afore. And byganne to think on the songe and on the beaulte of the lady. In so moche that he was as rauysshed and knew nat yf it was daylight or nyght, ne yf he slept or wakked./

Thus as ye shall now here was kynge helynas so abused / aswel of the right swete songe / as of the bewte of the said lady that he ne wyst whether he slept or waked, For euer styl she songe so melodyously that it was a swete and melodyous thing to here / Thenne the kynge Elynas was so rauysshed and abused that he remembred of nothinge worldly / but alonely that he herd and sawe the said lady,

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and abode there long tyme. Thanne camme rannyng toward him two of hys houndis whiche made to hym grett feste, and he lept and mevyd hym as a man wakynge from slep / and thenne he remembred of the chasse, and had of new so grett athurst / that without hauyng aduys ne mesure he yede fourth vpon the ryuage of the fountaynne, and toke the basyn which heng therby and drank of the watre. And thenne he beheld the said lady whiche had lefte her songe and salued her right humbly / beryng vnto her the gretest honour and reuerence that he might. Thanne she that coude and wyst moche of wele and of honour rendred to hym his salutacion right gracyously, "Lady," said Elynas, the kinge / "of your curtoysye be nat you dyspleased yf I requyre of you to knowe of your estate / of your beyng and what ye are / For the cause that moueth me therto is suche / as now I shall reherse to you. Right dere lady vouche ye saaf to wete and knowe that I can and know so moche of the beyng of this countree, that there nys within this foure or fyue myle neyther Castel ne ffortres, but þat I knowe / except that same fro whens I departed this day by the mornyng, whiche is two myle hens or theraboute. Nor there nys neyther lord ne lady within this Countrey but that I knowe them wel, and therfore gretly I meruaylle and wounderly am abasshed, fro whens may be suche a fayr and so gent a lady as ye be / so exempt and vnpurveyed of felawship. and for godis loue pardonne me / for grette outrage is to me to demande of you therof / but the grette desire and good wylle that my herte bereth toward your gracyous personne, hath caused hardynes within me for to doo it." /

"Sire Knight," said the lady / "there is none outrage / but it commeth to you of grette curtoysye and honour. And knowe you, sire knight, that I shall nat be longe alone whan it shal playse me / but from me I haue sent my seruaunts, while þat I dysported me." Thenne cam fourth to that word oon of her seruaunts, wel arayed, whiche rode on a fayre Courcer, and att his right hand ledd a palfroy so richely enharnashed that the king Elynas was moche abasshed of the grette richese and noble aray that was about the said palfray. Thanne said the seruaunt to his lady: "Madame, it is tyme whan it shall playse you to comme." And she fourthwith said to the kinge: "Sire knight, god be with you, and gramercy of your curtoisye.' thenne she went toward the palfray / and the kinge hyed hym, and helped to sette her on horsbak moche prately. And she thanked hym moche of hit, and departid. /

Having rejoined his courtiers, Elynas finds himself so deeply enamoured that he dismisses them and rides after the lady. He declares his love, and she consents to marry him if he promise never

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to attempt to see her while she is in childbed. So she becomes his queen, to the chagrin of his son Nathas, by a former wife, who revenges himself as follows :—

and it happed that she was at her childbed of thre doughtirs / . . . / the first borne was named Melusigne, the second Melyor, and the iijde Palatyne. The kynge Elynas was nat thanne present at that place, but kynge Nathas his sone was there, and beheld hys thre sustirs, that were so fayre that it was meruaylle. and thanne he went toward the kinge his fader : and thus he said to hym : " Sire / Madame, the quene Pressyne your wyf hath made and is delyuered of thre doughtirs, the most fayre that euer were seen / comme and see them." Thenne kinge Helynas, that remembred nat of the promysse that he had made to Pressyne his wyf / sayd / " ffayre sone / so wyl I doo." And yede apertly and entred anoon within the chambre wheras Pressyne bathed her thre doughtirs. and whan he saw them / he said in this manere : " god blesse the moder and the doughters," and toke of them grette Ioye. And whan Pressyne herde hym, she answerde hym, " Fals kinge, thou hast faylled thy couenaunt, wherof grett euyl shal comme vnto the / and hast lost me for euermore. And wel I wot that thy sone Nathas is cause therof, and departe I must fro the lightly, but yet I shalbe auenged me on thy sone by my sustir and felow, my lady of the yle lost." And these thinges said / she toke hir thre doughtirs and had them with her / and neuer aftir she was seen in the land. / [1]

In the metrical *Romans of Partenay*, or of Lusignan, which was translated (*c.* 1500-1520) from a poem made to order for William, lord of Pathenay, by a Poitevin, La Coudrette, a decade or thereabouts after Jean d'Arras had executed his, a similar commission, for the Duchesse de Bar, the charmed atmosphere of the prose tale has evaporated. The beautiful episode of the king's meeting with the strange lady in the forest, an incident that might have suggested a well-known scene in Maeterlinck's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, is omitted, and the crucial incident of the broken promise comes late in the story, instead of in its place at the beginning. The daughters of Pressyne conspire to punish their father for the sorrows he has brought on them and their mother, and manage to imprison him inside a mountain in Northumberland ; for which unfilial conduct

[1] *Melusine, compiled by Jean d'Arras, Englisht about 1500*, ed. A. K. Donald (E.E.T.S.), 1895, p. 7 *et seq.* There is an edition of the French original of this story also, ed. by C. Brunet (Bibliothèque Elzévirienne), 1854.

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Pressyne lays a curse on the three, the particular fate of Melusyne being that she shall be turned into a serpent every Saturday. Geoffrey of Lusignan, son of Melusyne, comes to the enchanted mountain in pursuit of a giant, and one of his barons tells him the tale in these words :

"My lorde," said on[1] of thaim, "beth[2] noght in doute ;
This montain wheron this Geant is truly
Full of the fairy is it all aboute.
The noble helmas, king of Albany,
With hys doughtres thre ther was verily
Enclosed with-in, nawhere myght issew,
By such werkes wroughten incongrew,

For that there moder, the lady presine,
lying in gesian[3] wilfully had sain ;
Which hym diffended that by non engine,
Vppon this diffence that she hym made plain.
Noght-withstandyng went to se hir dedes solain,[4]
Which therof with hir made had couenaunt
Goyng ne comyng to hir wold noght haunt,

As toward hyr whyle in gesian lay ;
Wher if so gan do, at end mischef shold.
With doughtres fair in lay she that day,
Thys ioly[5] lady, presine, to behold,
Doughtres thre had childed and vnfold,
helmas forsworn, periured, and comerd[6] to,
The couenaunt hold with presine made tho

For-soth he failled ; wherthorugh he lost
Presine hys lady, As after shall hyre ;
hyt declare And tell shall my wersom gost.[7]
With thes doughters thre he closed entire,[8]
For ther moder lost, the soth to acquire.
In this hy montain shitte up were thay tho,
Neuer was knowen to what place were goo."[9]

This dull doggerel is a fair specimen of the metrical romance, which in both content and style is far less poetical than the prose, though it is only right to say that the English translator made a

[1] One. [2] Be (imperative). [3] Child-bed.
[4] Done in solitude. [5] Pretty. [6] Cumbered (with chagrin).
[7] Weary spirit. [8] By his three daughters he was shut in.
[9] *Romans of Partenay*, ll. 4383-4410.

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more prosaic thing of it than the French poem from which he drew. Verse translation in the sixteenth century had fallen into the hands of professional hacks.

Raymond and Melusyne live happily together until, one Saturday, he breaks the covenant, and playing the spy upon his wife learns the secret of the doom which compels her once every week to take the shape of a serpent. Nevertheless she forgives him. But one day, in a fit of ill temper, he calls her "Serpent!" and the fate invoked by her mother falls on the hapless Melusyne. Henceforth she becomes a hideous being, half serpent, half woman, and must behold her husband and her children nevermore. No version, however halting, can rob this part of the legend of its intrinsic beauty. In the prose romance the parting of Raymond and Melusyne is one of the most pathetic scenes in all this primitive literature:

and, with these wordes, she embraced and kyssed hym full tenderly/ sayeng: "Farwel, myn owne lord and husbond; Adieu, myn herte, and al my joye; Farwel, my loue, and al myn wele[1] / and yet as long as thou lyuest, I shal feed myn eyen with the syght of the/ but pyte I haue on the of this, that thou mayst neuer see me but in horryble figure" / and therwith she lept vpon the windowe that was toward the feldes and gardyns ayenst Lusynen. /

So, "transfigured lyke a serpent grete and long in XV foote of length," she flew three times round the palace, uttering dolorous cries, then made her way through the air to Lusignan, "crying so pyteously and lamentably, lyke the voyce of a Mermayde," and vanished. It is a tragic motive of fairy legend that has inspired poets ancient and modern, from the times of Breton and Cymric folk-lore to those of Keats and Matthew Arnold. It rouses even the English versifier to inspired flights:

Afterwards she said, "adieu! sir Raymounde,
Whom I so loued with hert Fȳn And plain,
Neuer shall youe se at no day ne stounde.[2]
Adieu, my hert! Adieu, my loue certain!
Adieu, creature, my ioy souerain!
Adieu, myn entire loue moste gracious!
Adieu, my gentile Iewell precious!"

[1] Joy, weal. [2] Time, moment.

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—and so on for a tirade of four stanzas, after which she continues :

> " Adieu, wurthieste ! Adieu, with all honour !
> Adieu, my suete loue prented [1] in hert sad !
> Our lorde the aide And be thi concellour ! "
> With-out more spech A lepe ther she made,
> (Seyng the Barons all that ther were had),
> Thorught A fenistre [2] so passed and wend
> When of hyr wurdes thys had made an ende.[3]

" The Three Kings of Cologne "

About the same date as the *Romans of Partenay* (*c.* 1400) appeared a sacred romance, *The Three Kings of Cologne*, which was a translation of John of Hildesheim's *Historia Trium Regum*, written between 1364 and 1375. It is the much-embroidered legend of the three wise men, kings of the three Indies, who brought gifts to the infant Saviour, as is related by St Matthew. Sacred tradition has it that their bodies were carried by St Helena to Constantinople, falling later into the hands of the Saracens, from whom they were rescued and brought to Milan, whence they were finally translated to Cologne, A.D. 1164. A mass of legendary matter about Prester John and other mediæval celebrities, with travellers' tales about the incredible East, are worked into the pious narrative. The translator with his homely English plods doggedly after the long strides of the Latin ; but the result is not unpleasing because he attempts no false paces. The story must have been attractive at the period we have reached, Wynkyn de Worde publishing no less than five editions from 1499 onwards.

" Ponthus and Sidoine "

The fine old Saxon saga of Horn, castaway son of the king of Suddene, and Rimenhild, daughter of the king of Westerness, was made into a *chanson de geste* by the Anglo-Norman Thomas in the twelfth century, probably through an earlier French version, which is represented perhaps by the English *Geste of King Horn* (*c.* 1250). This favourite tale appeared at later dates in many redactions and ballad-histories, and in the middle of the fifteenth century was turned by a certain La Tour-Landry (either the author of the famous *Book of the Knight of the Tower*, or his son Ponthus), or else by a clerk employed by La Tour-Landry for the

[1] Imprinted. [2] Window.

[3] *Romans of Partenay*, ll. 3830-3864.

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purpose, into a prose romance with altered names and scenes, under the title of *Pontus et Sidoine*. There was a fifteenth-century English rendering, only a fragment of which is preserved, and a translation was published by Wynkyn de Worde, in 1511, under the title, *The Noble Hystory of Ponthus of Galyce and of lytell Brytayne*. Like the *Book of the Knight of the Tower*, of which Caxton printed an indifferent translation in 1484, unaware that a finer one had been done some years before, this was a book of courtesy, delineating an ideal type of knighthood; it was also an oblique glorification of the family of La Tour-Landry, who held lands in Brittany, the heroine's country. *Horn and Rimenhild* was the pattern story of a lover of unknown origin winning the affection of a princess, being driven into exile for his impudence, and returning in the nick of time to save the lady from a hated marriage, his own recognition as legitimate king of a neighbouring realm crowning the happy issue. It was a Norse or, at any rate, a Northern story; the Frenchman transposed it into Southern terms. For Suddene he makes the hero a prince of Galicia, and instead of Westerness he places the heroine in Brittany. The heathen who expel Ponthus from his native land are Saracens. One name alone, that of the Breton king's steward Herlant, is retained from the old romance.

"*Ipomedon*"

It should be mentioned here that there is a prose version of *Ipomedon*, a French metrical romance produced about 1185 by Hue de Rotelande. Hue, who was a contemporary of the French school of romancers headed by Chrétien, had the courage to weave the threads and colours of the current romance of love and adventure into a new pattern, without reproducing any traditional story. His characters have classical and other picturesque names; his scenes are Sicily, Calabria, and Apulia; but the brilliant tournaments, the love stratagems, the sprightly dialogue, sentimental soliloquies, and the like are common properties of the minstrel profession, handled, however, with exceptional skill. There was a full English rendering of the poem at the middle of the fourteenth century, and a condensed *Lyfe of Ipomydon* early in the fifteenth. The prose version was made perhaps a little earlier than the second of these verse renderings, and appears to have been done from the original French. It has not been printed. According to Professor

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J. E. Wells, "it introduces some slight additions for expansion of details and for closer motivation." [1]

"The Three Kings' Sons"

Another prose romance that failed till modern times to find a printer was *The Three Kings' Sons*, Englished from the French about 1500 from a manuscript written in 1465 in Flanders by David Aubert, who may have been the author.[2] It is romance of a hackneyed kind. Alfour, king of Sicily, almost overwhelmed by the Turks, is succoured by three princes from England, France, and Scotland, who meet with the stereotyped adventures and caprices of fortune, but at length expel the invaders. Being all three in love with the daughter of Alfour, presently elected Emperor of Germany, the princes come back as monarchs to contend for her in a grand tournament. She is won by Philip of France, and the marriage festivities conclude the piece.

"Valentyne and Orson"

A more famous tale, *Valentyne and Orson*, was printed at Lyons in 1489; and Wynkyn de Worde, Copland, and their successors printed numerous English editions right down to the eighteenth century. Here, again, the usual sham history is utilised to give circumstantial authority to a fanciful tale, with a variant of the popular Griseldis legend as a starting-point. The emperor of Constantinople having driven out his wife, who has been falsely accused, she gives birth to twin sons in a forest, Orson, who is suckled by a bear, and Valentyne, who is brought up in purple and fine linen by his uncle, Pepin, father of Charlemagne. Their true relationship is revealed by a Brazen Head. The brothers fight the Green Knight and the equally notorious giant Ferragus, king of Portugal, and engage in wars with the Saracens. By an anachronism, the capture of Pepin and the Twelve Peers is dragged in, with their safe deliverance; conventional extravagances, the feats of Pacolet and Adriman, rival enchanters, and combats with ogres and dragons, furnishing the required sensations.

Helias, the Swan Knight

There were two forms of the old legend of the Swan Knight, in one of which the hero is named Lohengrin, and in the other Helias, the former being the usual name in Flemish and Low German versions, the latter in French forms of the legend. In the early Germanic form Lohengrin is one of the knights of the Grail,

[1] *Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, 1916, 149

[2] Ed. F. J. Furnivall (E.E.T.S.), 1895.

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who is summoned to fight as champion of Elsa, duchess of Brabant, against a false suitor who claims her hand. He is brought to Antwerp in a boat drawn by a swan, vanquishes the traitor and weds the duchess, but forbids her to ask about his race and country. They live happily together till, one day, Elsa is persuaded by a malicious friend to put the fatal question. Then, like Melusyne, Lohengrin sadly departs, returning as he had come in the swan boat to the Castle of the Grail. Wolfram in his *Parzival* had made the Swan Knight the son of Perceval, and called him Loherangrin.

The French forms of the story are more elaborate, and bring the legend into the cycle of Godfrey of Bouillon, said to be the grandson of Helias the Swan Knight. Helias is one of seven children born at a single birth. The evil mother-in-law pretends that the young queen has been delivered of seven whelps. She has the babes exposed in a forest, but they are rescued by a hermit. When, some years later, the old queen hears that they are living, she sends a servant to put them to death and bring her the silver chains which were round their necks when they were born. The man is touched with pity, and resolves to take back the chains as a token that he has performed his errand, but to let the children go. He does not find Helias, who is absent with the hermit. The other six, the moment their chains are removed, change into swans and fly away. Meanwhile the old queen continues her machinations against the mother, who is at length condemned to the stake. But Helias, now grown up, is directed to go to his father's city and do her justice. He fights the accuser's champion and vindicates his parent; the villainous mother-in-law is burned in her stead. Helias is now recognised as son of the king. The silver chains are produced, all but one of them, which had been made into a cup, and the parents weep for the six children who had been changed into swans.

But our Lord that consoleth his friends in exalting their good will showed greatly his virtue. For in the river that ran about the king's palace appeared visibly the swans before all the people. And when Helias had seen them, he called diligently the king and the queen his father and mother saying, "I pray you my lord and my lady that ye will lightly come and see your other notable children my v. brethren and my sister. The which be now presently arrived upon the river that is about this palace." And incontinently the king and

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the queen descended with many lords, knights, and gentlemen, and came with great diligence upon the water side, for to see the above said swans. The king and the queen beheld them piteously in weeping for sorrow that they had to see their poor children so transmuted into swans. And when they saw the good Helias come near them they began to make a marvellous feast and rejoiced them in the water. So he approached upon the brink, and when they saw him near them, they came lightly fawning and flickering about him making him cheer, and he planed lovingly their feathers. After he showed them the chains of silver, whereby they set them in good order before him. And to five of them he remised the chains about their necks, and suddenly they began to return in their proper human form as they were before, and before all miraculously they showed them iiii. fair sons and a daughter. To whom diligently the king and the queen ran, and naturally kissed them as their children, whereof every man had marvel, and joyed of the divine miracle of God so notably showed. And when the other swan (whose chain was molten for to make the cup as afore is said) saw his brethren and his sister returned into their human forms he leapt again all sorrowfully into the river, and for dole that he had he plucked almost all his feathers to the bare flesh. And when the good Helias saw him so dolorously demean himself, he took him to weep for sorrow, and recomforted him saying, "My dear brother my friend, have somewhat patience, and discomfort you not. For I shall make so meek and humble prayers unto God almighty for you, that yet I shall see you once a noble knight. And then the swan began to incline and bow down his head as in thanking him and sith plunged himself all together in the water. And for him in likewise the king and queen made much lamentation. But Helias comforted them sweetly, and said to them that he would in such wise pray unto our Lord for him that in short time he should return into his own natural form. And thus they ceased somewhat of their sorrow by the consolation and goodly words of the said Helias for their other son, wherefore they took benignly the other V children and led them to the church where they made them to be baptized.[1]

The French version followed in the prose story, which was printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1512 and afterwards by Copland, from this point corresponds to the old German legend; but instead of Elsa, duchess of Brabant, it brings in Clarisse, duchess of Bouillon, as

[1] *The Knight of the Swanne* (*Early English Prose Romances*, ed. W. J. Thoms; new edition revised and enlarged, 1907), pp. 745-746.

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the lady rescued from a would-be usurper by the Swan Knight, who is conducted to the spot by his brother, the hapless swan who could not be changed back to his rightful shape. Helias marries, however, not the duchess, but her daughter, in whose favour the duchess resigns her territory, and so he becomes Duke of Bouillon. Of their daughter were born the three famous brothers, Godfrey, Baldwin, and Eustace de Bouillon. As in the Lohengrin story, the Swan Knight forbids his wife to ask concerning his country and kindred, though no reason is vouchsafed for this curious injunction. She fails to observe it, and he sails away with his swan brother. But in trying to give actuality to what is essentially a fairy-tale the prosaic moderniser spoils the conclusion. Instead of vanishing into the mysterious other world of the Grail Castle, Helias merely disappears, leaving no address. He has returned to his parents, who apparently reside somewhere in France. It takes his forsaken duchess years and years, however, to trace him. Her daughter has been long married, and her grandchildren, the future worthies, are growing up, when at length her emissaries discover her husband's retreat. He has withdrawn from the world and become a monk ; he refuses to return ; and when she herself makes a pilgrimage to see him she finds him on his death-bed. Thus there is plenty of pathos in the story, which is also very picturesque and lavish of exciting incident. In the Middle English poem, the *Chevalere Assigne*, from the French *Chevalier au Cygne*, the sixth brother is a still more pathetic figure, for he remains "always a swan for the loss of his chain." But the later story-teller must have poetic justice at all costs ; wherefore after many prayers and masses the pilot swan is restored to his human shape, with the loss of that most affecting touch.

Influences from the Spanish Peninsula

Among all the mediæval romances that have been enumerated there was only one, Hue de Rotelande's *Ipomedon*, with its sequel, *Prothesilaus*, that did not reproduce, with more or less fidelity, some antecedent story. With the passing of mediæval romance this loyalty to tradition was also passing. But Spanish romance had long ago broken the reins and galloped off on a mad career of fantasy that left Renaud de Beaujeu and Hue de Rotelande far in the rear. The adventures of Amadis and Palmerin had a mere jumping-off place in Arthurian story and Breton wonder-lore, and ran a course of their own in regions many leagues beyond Broceliande

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and Logres. Earlier than this skittish family of romances Spain had had her own national cycle, which, though it possessed a more tangible basis in historical fact, was a complete analogue in its process of growth to those of Arthur and Charlemagne. This national cycle sprang from the great patriotic legend of the Cid.[1] Ruy Diaz, the Cid Campeador of history—he was born between 1030 and 1040 and died in 1099—was probably as selfish, unscrupulous, and savage a feudal warrior as he was undoubtedly lion-hearted. In the epical developments of his story he is transfigured into a hero having the chivalric perfections of the romantic Amadis, Esplandian, and Palmerin. Southey made his prose compilation, by which alone the legend comes into English literature, from the *Crónica del Cid*, the *Crónica General de España*, both printed in the sixteenth century but of high antiquity as manuscripts, and the *Poema del Cid* of the twelfth century. The Cid legend was firmly rooted in folk memory and actual record, and, in spite of the idealising tendency alluded to, it differs from the romances of chivalry that succeeded it as a hero-saga differs from Italian opera.

"Amadis de Gaula"

It was not, however, the epical chronicles of the Cid that exercised a far-reaching though almost inexplicable influence on European literature during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but a series of extravagant fictions that to an unvitiated taste are immeasurably inferior and are more destitute of verisimilitude than the wildest older romance. *Amadis de Gaula* and the large progeny of romances which were its issue are a very artificial and exotic growth, not merely in comparison with the legend of the Cid, but also in comparison with the French, the British, and the classical cycles. They did not arise, in the manner customary and natural to the mediæval mind, from popular legend, but were a studied imitation of the foreign *roman d'aventure* — if, indeed, the *Amadis* did not actually originate in France, as Scott and others have claimed.[2] Whether the original author was Vasco de Lobeira the Portuguese (d. 1403) or the earlier Joham de Lobeira (1261-1325), a Galician knight at the Portuguese Court, is not our present affair. There are weighty arguments for a Catalonian origin in the fourteenth century. Cervantes called this the earliest and best of

[1] J. Fitzmaurice-Kelly, *Chapters on Spanish Literature*, 1908, i.
[2] *Cp.* J. Fitzmaurice-Kelly, *Spanish Literature* 1898, p. 123.

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the Spanish romances of chivalry, yet it was the direct progenitor of the monstrous regiment of absurdities and unrealities against which he aimed his satire. The book was printed at Saragossa in 1508,[1] arranged in four books by García Ordoñez de Montalvo, and continuations by his own and other hands quickly followed. At the instance of Francis I., who had read the book in Spain while a prisoner after the battle of Pavia, Montalvo's recension was translated into French in 1539 by Nicholas de Herberay, seigneur des Essarts. This French version had gone into seven editions by 1553, bringing about a revival of chivalric romance; through it the book became known in England. A collection of extracts from des Essarts, consisting of "eloquent orations, pithy epistles, learned letters, and fervent complaints," was Englished as early as 1567 by Thomas Paynell in his *Treasurie of Amadis of Fraunce*; and in 1588 that "dismal draper of misplaced literary ambitions," [2] Anthony Munday, brought out his complete translation of the first book of *Amadis of Gaule*, continuing with the second book in 1595 and the whole four in 1619. Several of the continuations were translated during the seventeenth century, together with divers abridgments, one of the latest of these latter being published in 1702.

In the *Amadis* and the numerous romances that strove to outdo it the fantastic element swallows up the historical and even the legendary and the last links with reality are broken. Gaula is supposed to be Wales, though some translators, not unreasonably, took it to be France, at a period long anterior to that of Arthur; and place-names such as Windsor, Bristol, and Gravesend are recognisable under Spanish disguises. But geography and chronology are as arbitrary as in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and the anachronisms—the mention of artillery, for instance—are so many that they soon cease to have the charm of the unexpected. The story is dressed throughout in the costume of the age when it was put together—the declining years of the age of chivalry. Behind it were the legends of Britain and Brittany and all the French romances.

[1] The first native romance of chivalry printed in Spain was *Tirant lo Blanch* (1490), but it had had a predecessor in *El Cavallero Cifar*, written *c.* 1300, though not printed until 1512 (H. Thomas, *Spanish and Portuguese Romances of Chivalry*, 1920, pp. 1-40). Professor Fitzmaurice-Kelly thinks the *Amadis* was in print by 1496 if not before, although there is no earlier edition extant than that of 1508.

[2] J. Fitzmaurice-Kelly.

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But while from these well-used sources it borrows monsters, giants, enchantments, and all the magic that came in handy for melodramatic purposes, and exaggerates these marvellous features to outrageous lengths, it somehow divests them of the last vestiges of glamour that had clung even to the later embodiments of antique myth. The giants are several cubits taller and much more plentiful, the spells and sorceries more preposterous, the prowess required to overcome them is more superhuman. Everything, in short, is overdone, not excepting the doctrine of courtly love which had been taken over with the other properties from French romance. Guenevere's imperiousness and the obstinate resentment of Laudine are amiable caprices compared with the ruthless disdain with which the virtuous ladies in the *Amadis* condemn their lovers to years of suffering and banishment, unnumbered perilous adventures, and incessant plaints and despairs, before they will own the least spark of answering affection. The perfect lover is he who shows invincible constancy, no matter how his mistress scorns him or how sorely he is tempted by other charmers, patient obsequiousness to her lightest wish, and a refined sensibility worthy of her peerless beauty and virtue. Riches, fame, power are as nothing in the balance compared with love. His lady is sole object of his ambition, his only star ; love is the incentive of all noble action.

Amadis is accordingly depicted as the paragon of courtesy and knightly valour, of chastity and fealty to his lady ; in him every article of the code is illustrated to the letter. Exalted sentiment shines through every incident and inspires many admirable sayings. But there is an inconsistency, a moral contradiction, more glaring even than that which led puritanical critics to denounce the Arthurian stories as vain and amatorious. In spite of the lofty sentiments and the unmitigated goodness of the hero, the naughty adventures of erring knights and voluptuous ladies are dwelt upon with a complacency, especially in the later sequels and compilations, that called forth the protest of La Noue that the Amadisian romances were instruments of moral corruption.[1] Galaor, the brother and foil to Amadis, as famous for his amorous exploits and inconstancy as the latter was for his devotion, seems to have proved a more alluring figure to many readers than the impeccable hero ;

[1] Reynier, p. 203, and Thomas, pp. 217 and 265.

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he is certainly more akin to frail humanity. To these incitements to loose behaviour were presently added theological fallacies, for a number of late romances allegorised the chief personages, making Christ figure as the Knight of the Lion and the twelve Apostles as the paladins of the Round Table. The civil authorities took action in 1531 by putting the chivalric romances under a royal embargo in the American colonies, and in 1555 the Cortes prohibited them in Spain, ordering all copies to be collected and burned.[1]

The story of the begetting of Amadis was obviously suggested by that of Arthur, son of Uther and Igraine. He is the unlawful child of Perion, king of Gaula, and an English princess whom Perion afterwards marries. Like Taliesin, he is cast adrift on a river, is carried out to sea, rescued and brought up by a Scottish knight as the Child of the Sea. It is as a boy at the Court of the Scottish king that he first sees Oriana, the peerless daughter of Lisuarte, king of Great Britain, and surrenders his heart to her for evermore. The two main threads of the complicated fabric are the career of Amadis as a knight-errant of unparalleled courage and the ups and downs of his courtship. His brother Galaor's exploits form another thread. Oriana's jealousy and its consequences, the wars with the race of Giants, the deeds of Amadis in the disguise of Beltenebros, and later as the Knight of the Green Sword, with the mighty war for the hand of Oriana, are at length brought to a happy termination by the ordeal of the Forbidden Chamber and the union of hero and heroine, to whom Lisuarte leaves the succession to his kingdom. The several continuations composed, not only in Spanish, but also in French and Italian, carry the history much further, dealing in a tedious, imitative fashion with the doings of kinsmen and descendants. The prolixity and the unreality become unendurable.

"Palmerín de Oliva" and "Palmerín de Inglaterra"

After the Amadis cycle came that of Palmerin, equally prolific in sequels and imitations. According to tradition, the first of the series, *Palmerín de Oliva* (1511), was the work of a carpenter's daughter of Burgos; the Francisco Vásquez, who indited the manuscript, may perhaps have been her son.[2] Palmerin sallies out in quest of adventures, slays divers monsters, fights the Grand Turk, and after bewildering vicissitudes marries Polinarda, daughter of

[1] Thomas, pp. 176-178.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

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the German emperor, and himself becomes emperor of Byzantium. Best among the continuations is the sixth book, *Palmerín de Inglaterra* (1547-1548), by the Portuguese, Francisco de Moraes [1]; this and *Amadís de Gaula* were the two books spared from the fire by the curate in the destruction of Don Quixote's library of romances. It deals with the adventures, not unlike those of Valentyne and Orson, of the twin sons of Palmerin de Oliva's daughter. In emulation of Amadis and Galaor, they fight with each other, and with giants, felon knights, paynims, and other foes innumerable. Of the intricate and monotonous chronicle of their knight-errantries the only interesting episode is the adventure of the Perilous Isle. There is character-drawing of a rudimentary sort in the figures of knights and giants; but the female personages are nullities. True to the mediæval view that plagiarism was a duty and originality a thing never to be admitted, the authors of these romances always cited authority for their statements—papers they had found in the library of the emperor of Trebizond or other documents not less mythical.

Anthony Munday brought out this series also by instalments, translated all or mostly from French versions. *Palmerin d'Oliva, the Mirrour of Nobilitie* (1588-1597) was followed by *Palmendos* (1589) and *Primaleon of Greece* (1595-1596), the stories of Palmerin's sons, and these by *Palmerin of England* (? 1581-1595).[2] Certain intervening books were not translated. There were several editions of most portions of the cycle, not to mention abridgments. Paynell's attempt to introduce the *Amadís* in 1567 seems to have fallen flat; but Anthony Munday, despite his indifferent style, succeeded in making these romances popular.

Actually the first Spanish romance of chivalry in the style of *Amadís* to be translated in full into English was, however, the *Espejo de Príncipes y Cavalleros* of Diego Ortuñez de Calahorra (1562), which appeared as *The Mirrour of Princely Deedes and Knighthood* (1580), with a dedication signed Margaret Tyler. This

[1] The disputed authorship has been finally settled in favour of Francisco de Moraes (see J. Fitzmaurice-Kelly, "Palmerin of England: Some Remarks . . . on the Controversy concerning its Authorship, by W. E. Purser," in the *Revue Hispanique*, x. 5-25, 1903).

[2] Anthony Munday's *Palladine of England* (1588) does not belong to the Amadis series, but was translated from the *Histoire Palladienne* (1555), a French version of the first part of the Portuguese romance, *Florando de Inglaterra* (1545)

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first book was followed by the second, translated from the continuation by Pedro de la Sierra, and the third and fourth, from Marcos Martiñez. More famous and much more acceptable to the reading public, although it was condemned in the severest terms by Don Quixote's curate, was the high-flown *Don Belianís de Grecia* (1547-1579), which appeared as *The Honour of Chivalrie, set downe in the most Famous Historie of the Magnanimous and Heroike Prince Don Bellianis* (1598), and, besides later editions, other versions and at least one abridgment, had the distinction of a second and third part by an English writer.[1]

Chivalric romances translated by Lord Berners

The Spanish romances of chivalry did not become widely known in England until the Elizabethan period, nor had they any important influence on English fiction until the time of Sidney and the imitators of his *Arcadia*. They were, like Malory's *Morte Darthur*, an aftermath of mediæval romance, though, unlike his great book, the *Amadís* and the *Palmerín* had a large immediate issue. In this case the belated crop sprouted anew, and bore degenerate fruit season after season, till the ground became quite impoverished. But the reason for mentioning them here, instead of waiting till we come to the English writers who followed their lead, is that already, in the reign of Henry VIII., one of Caxton's translators, Lord Berners, rendered into English a Spanish romance, and a French one obviously produced in imitation of Spanish romanticism. At that time there was keen interest among the intellectual classes in Spanish literature. Berners was one of a small group of enthusiasts who read and translated not merely romances but also works of philosophy and moral reflection, religious treatises, and other Spanish writings. That famous novel in dialogue, the *Celestina*, was adapted into English as an interlude about 1530, and in 1534 Berners published his *Golden Book of Marcus Aurelius* from Guevara. Berners was in Spain in 1518 on a diplomatic mission, but it is doubtful if he ever became proficient in the language, and he certainly used a French version for his rendering of Guevara. *The Castle of Love*, as well as *Arthur of Little Britain*, may have been Englished from the French.

[1] Francis Kirkman (see H. Thomas, *Spanish and Portuguese Romances of Chivalry*, 1920, pp. 242-243 and 257-258; and A. Esdaile, *List of English Tales and Romances*, pp. 20-21).

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"The Castle of Love"

Diego de San Pedro's *Cárcel de Amor*, printed in 1492, is a curious mixture of allegory somewhat akin to the *Roman de la Rose*, of sentimental fiction illustrating the laws and ordinances of courtly love, and of chivalric romance in the current mode. It is remarkable for its artificiality and affectation even among the artificial effusions of that idealistic and stilted time, and appears to have been a work of San Pedro's youth.[1] At the commencement Leriano, stricken with love for Laureola, daughter of the king of Macedonia, describes himself to the narrator as imprisoned in the Castle of Love, a castle founded on a rock which is his fidelity, and the four marble pillars of which are his understanding, his reason, his memory, and his will. Three images surmount the tower, Sorrow, Anguish, and Tribulation, fastened with chains which keep his heart in such duress that it can receive no relief.[2] He is held in torture on a seat of fire, which is his true affection. Two ladies who hold a crown of martyrdom on his brows are, the one Affliction, and the other Passion. A series of letters exchanged with his mistress, followed by conversations with which she favours him, develop the sentimental theme after the pedantic ritual of both earlier and later votaries of *l'amour courtois*. There follow a succession of tournaments and adventures in the field ; but instead of a happy issue the Spaniard represents Laureola as more fastidious and unyielding even than Oriana. She refuses to accept her lover because he had involuntarily laid her open to suspicion, and he dies eloquently discoursing on the perfections of the sex and confuting his bosom friend, whose grief had betrayed him into violent abuse of their unreasonableness. This strange medley hit the taste of the time. The book was translated into Italian about 1513, and from the Italian came a French version in 1526, whence, in all probability, Berners made his translation, which did not appear until

[1] San Pedro's other novel, *Arnalte e Lucenda*, was apparently written still earlier, being printed in 1491. It is a very simple love story, similar to the *Cárcel de Amor* in its sentimental abandonment and preference for the contrarieties and pangs of love to its transports and triumphs ; but dissimilar in the absence of the cumbrous allegorical machinery and of the adventurous incident. Reynier suggests that it may have been a first sketch for the better-known novel, as the analogies are striking. It was translated into English by "Claudius Hollyband"—*i.e.* Claude Desainliens—in 1575, and there were three later editions by 1608.

[2] All this reads like a transposition of Grosseteste's descriptions in the *Château d'Amour*, where the Castle of Love is the body of the Virgin, and the four towers are symbols of the four cardinal virtues.

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1540,[1] four years after his death. The French translation was an important link between the romances of chivalry and the sentimental novels, typified by D'Urfé's *Astrée*, which were shortly to be all the rage. The book must have had considerable vogue in England too, to judge by the fact that there were three new editions of Lord Berners's rendering by 1564.

Berners translated the other novel, *Arthur of Little Britain*, from the French *Artus de la Bretagne* or *Le petit Artus de Bretaigne*, of which the first extant edition appeared about 1493. In spite of its suggestive title this is not an Arthurian story, but belongs to the same species of irresponsible adventure as the Amadis romances. The scene of action is France, and for the main part Brittany, of which the hero's father is reigning duke. Arthur loves a maid of low degree, but his parents compel him to marry a lady of noble family. By one of those delicate situations which were the delight of romancers it is found necessary to put the low-born maiden in the place of the Lady Perron on the bridal night, and the astute damsel improves the occasion by getting into her hands Perron's dowry and a ring of great value destined by Arthur for his bride. This of course gives rise to interesting complications. A series of wild adventures succeeds, fights with giants and giantesses, dragons, griffins, and all the mythological beasts; tourneys and battles are waged round the Toure Tenebrous and the Mounte Peryllous against "King Sarasyn called the Sowdan" and innumerable other foes. The part sustained in *Amadis* by Oriana is assumed by Florence of Argenton, a lady of surpassing beauty, daughter of the powerful King Emendus. At the end of his travails Arthur marries her and becomes king of Soroloys, his low-born love being disposed of to one of his comrades. In one characteristic scene Proserpine, queen of the Fayry, who is the Acrasia of the story, puts on the semblance of the beauteous Florence, and is on the point of being wedded to the emperor of Ynde the More when she suddenly vanishes into thin air. According to Dunlop[2] the plot contains allusions, which contemporary readers could scarcely miss, to the rupture of the infant marriage of Charles VIII. and Margaret of

[1] According to J. G. Underhill's *Spanish Literature in the England of the Tudors*, p. 68. Esdaile dates the first English edition "? 1548" (see *English Tales and Romances*, p. 123).

[2] *The History of Fiction*, 4th edition, 1876, pp. 106-110.

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Austria, daughter of the Emperor Maximilian. This took place in 1491, and Margaret, to the disgust of the Emperor, became the wife of the French king next year. The English version is a very charming specimen of Berners's narrative style. The earliest English edition known appears to have been the second, printed by Redborne (*c.* 1520-1530). There was another edition by East (1582). The French original early went into three new editions, and later the Count de Tressan included a mutilated abstract in his collection of the old romances.

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CHAPTER IX

POPULAR TALES

Tales of common life, used for didactic purposes

THE romantic literature examined in the foregoing pages was in origin, aim, and character an aristocratic literature. Its themes were war and love, the most approved occupations of the military caste, or the passages with beings of another world which were the happy or the evil lot of individuals born of high and perhaps mysterious lineage. Its personages were monarchs and feudal chieftains, great ladies and ladies-in-waiting, knights and esquires, bishops and abbots, and now and then a simple priest, and persons supernatural, or invested with supernatural powers, who were their equals or superiors in dignity. Of the common people there was rarely a glimpse; they stood in a very distant background. For the romancers were not writing about them or for them, but for the pleasure of court and castle. Even in the rude versions which seem to have been prepared for humbler circles the heroes were still kings, barons, and knights, and the heroines ladies of race or of fairyland.

But long before the close of the Middle Ages an utterly different kind of fiction had begun to appear, first in Latin for delivery in the vernacular, and then, from the fourteenth century onwards, in collections ready translated. This was addressed to Everyman, and Everyman, for the most part, did not belong to the higher orders with whom the romancers were concerned. He had no dislike to hearing about what went on in more exalted spheres, any more than he has to-day; but he was sure to be interested a great deal more in situations and incidents in which he might conceive himself taking part. Now it was above all things necessary that the stories in question should not only amuse, but should really strike home, for they were, first and foremost, stories with a purpose—a didactic purpose. They were invented, or reported, or borrowed from all accessible sources, expressly for the use of the clergy in illustrating points in their sermons, or to rivet the attention of a

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listless or dull-witted congregation and impart a moral or doctrinal lesson at the same time. Preachers in the Middle Ages believed as firmly as the American after-dinner orator of to-day in the sovereign efficacy of the anecdote seductively told, no matter whether apposite to the matter in hand or shamelessly dragged in by the heels. If the incident recounted might have happened in everyday life, so much the better. But the older repositories of tales comprised few of that sort; their characters and scenes were strange and remote; the only point of resemblance was in the play of motive and the perpetual recurrence of situation. Given the story, the homilist pointed out the application, though in most of the collections this essential work was done for him beforehand, leaving, however, plenty of scope to those with a vivid sense of reality to clothe the bare skeleton with flesh and blood. In time such application of stories to everyday life had the natural result of promoting the accumulation, and then the invention, of stories of everyday life. The tale told by the priest for the edification of his flock had more perhaps to do with the progress of realism, or at any rate with establishing closer relations between story-telling and actuality, than had all the romances put together.[1]

Precursors of the "Gesta Romanorum"

The didactic use of tales, by the method of direct application or by way of parable or allegory, comes down from time immemorial. It was a well-established practice in the Anglo-Saxon Church; Ælfric's homilies, as we have seen, relied very largely on anecdote and even on the biographical story of considerable length for their practical effect. Likewise the fable, such as those in the bestiaries, served a serious utilitarian purpose in the Middle Ages: it was the handiest instrument of moral education. Hence the translations of Æsop, one of which, afterwards taken by Marie de France as the basis of her *Ysopet*, was fathered upon King Alfred; hence, also, a popular compilation in Latin prose, not from Æsop as it professed, but from Phædrus and other fabulists, put together in the eleventh century, probably in England, and known as *Romulus*, after a Roman emperor who was supposed to have redacted it. Out of such materials at first, and later on with additions from history,

[1] How the stories were actually worked into the discourse can be studied in Mirk's *Festial: A Collection of Homilies, by Johannes Mirkus*, ed. Theodor Erbe (E.E.T.S.), Part I., 1905.

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tradition, Holy Scripture, monkish legend, and popular hearsay, were compiled regular manuals for the pulpit, doctrinal encyclopædias, dictionaries of moral philosophy, books of examples, consisting chiefly of entertaining stories, each accompanied by the dry bones of an ethical interpretation, which the preacher adapted to the tenor of his discourse. In the twelfth century the *Speculum Doctrinale* of Vincent of Beauvais drew much of its contents from Phædrus and his like; Petrus Comestor also included many fables in his *Historia Scholastica*, and published a collection of *Allegoriæ*. The English Cistercian Odo de Ceriton was responsible for a series of fables in Latin prose, all carefully adapted for moralistic teaching and widely used for the purpose, which, it is interesting to notice, was indebted to the great Continental beast epic of *Reynard the Fox*, as appears from the names of some of his animals —Reynard, Isengrim, and Teburgus. Among similar compendiums in the following century two of the best-used were Jacques de Vitry's *Exempla* (*c.* 1240) and Étienne de Bourbon's *Liber de Septem Donis* (*c.* 1261). The fourteenth century saw a good many such compilations, the most important of which in literary history was the *Gesta Romanorum*, which probably originated in its Latin form in this country, and was translated into the vernacular during the reign of Henry VI.[1] This was probably earlier, not only than the Dominican Robert Holkot's *Moralitates*, but also than the portly tomes of Petrus Berchorius, or Bierre Bercheur, prior of a Benedictine convent at Paris, whose *Reductorium super totam Bibliam*, *Repertorium Morale*, and *Dictionarium Morale* bear such a near resemblance to the *Gesta* that he has by some scholars been credited with the original authorship of that work. His *Reductorium* is said to have comprised all the stories in the Bible reduced to the form of allegories, and the purpose of the other thesauri was to supply an illustrative story on any ethical or doctrinal topic whatever. Another candidate for the honour of compiling the original *Gesta* whose claims are now discredited was John Bromyard, an English theologian who flourished about the end of the fourteenth century, author of a *Summa Predicantium*, an alphabetical encyclopædia of divinity, illustrated in the usual way by stories. Outside the realm of

[1] Introduction to *The Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum*, ed. S. J. H. Herrtage (E.E.T.S.), 1879.

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divinity, but begotten of the same propensity for dramatic moralisation, were such treasuries of anecdote as the famous *Book of the Knight of the Tower*, written by La Tour-Landry about 1371-1372 for the instruction of his three daughters in conduct and courtesy. This is packed with examples, collected for the author by two priests and two clerks, from Scripture, fable, history, and personal reminiscence. Caxton translated it, but there was an earlier and better rendering of about the same date as the English version of the *Gesta*.[1]

The early date of the *Gesta* is pretty conclusively settled by the fact that Robert Holkot, who died in 1349, borrowed several semi-historical tales from it for his *Moralitates*, and by the further fact that Boccaccio helped himself to others in the *Decameron* (1348-1358). Oesterley showed good reason for believing that the book was compiled towards the end of the thirteenth or, at latest, very early in the fourteenth century. One manuscript, of the year 1326, in its corruptions of proper names and the like, shows traces of several stages of copying. The Anglo-Latin *Gesta* circulated widely on the Continent, and grew by constant additions. It was copied and expanded so often, and so many new stories were introduced, that few among the surviving manuscripts resemble each other at all closely, and some are so unlike as to have given learned editors reason to suppose that they must be different books, compiled in imitation of the *Gesta*. At the age of printing selections were made for the press, the Utrecht edition adopting about a hundred and fifty tales, and the Cologne edition, described by critics as the vulgate, a hundred and eighty-one. These printed editions speedily became current in this country, and thus led to the gradual disappearance of English manuscripts of the earlier *Gesta*. Manuscripts of the Middle English rendering, which is of special interest here, belong to the period *c.* 1440 to *c.* 1500. Wynkyn de Worde printed an English translation (*c.* 1510-1515), but this contained only forty-three stories: it was based on a manuscript from the English group.[2] His selection was modernised and touched up by an industrious bookmaker, Richard Robinson, who stated that seven editions of his work were called for between 1577 and 1602.[3] Hazlitt records fifteen more down to 1703,[4] when

[1] Ed. T. Wright (E.E.T.S.), 1868.
[2] *Ibid.*, xxii.-xxiii.
[3] *Ibid.*, xxiii.
[4] Confirmed by Esdaile.

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another translation came into the field, and was several times reprinted. Testimony sufficient, this, that the popularity of the *Gesta* was long in declining; in fact it was selling well as a chap-book even in the eighteenth century. Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate, as well as Boccaccio, quarried in it for plots; that Shakespeare did so is known to everyone; perhaps not so many are aware that several distinguished moderns have followed their example, among them Schiller and Rossetti.

Sources of the "Gesta"

The *Gesta Romanorum* has little more claim than the mediæval Matter of Rome to be regarded even as traditional history of the Romans. It is true that the tales in the Anglo-Latin *Gesta*, as represented by the Early English translation, are attached to certain Roman emperors by name[1]; but many of these imaginary sponsors are mythical, and others, such as Alexander, were not emperors of Rome. Probably the nucleus was an assortment of tales from the minor classical writers and from Latin chroniclers, which was described as gests of the Romans moralised, the primary object being to provide a collection of stories that would form suitable texts for the moralisations. To this nucleus was added tale after tale of the most diverse origin and subject—any fairy story, fable, or legend, in short, that could be forced by any desperate feat of manipulation to point an acceptable lesson. As time went on the contents grew more and more diversified.

The Indian source

As chiefly responsible for the allegorical interpretation which became eventually the general feature of the *Gesta*, Oriental fable was the most important of all the sources. It was the Oriental mind that invented the apologue, of which allegory is merely an extension. The folk-tale embodying a moral lecture originated in India at a time that may be considered prehistoric. Of those comprised in the *Jataka*, a Pali storehouse of tales forming part of the Buddhist scriptures, the great majority have been shown to be pre-Buddhist, these primeval tales having been adapted, by the simple expedient of making one of the characters a Bodhisatta or candidate for enlightenment, or by giving the incident a suitable setting, to the purposes of Buddhist teaching. Tales of like prehistoric origin are found in the great Brahminic treasury, the *Panchatantra*, in

[1] Thus Lear becomes the emperor Theodosius, and Atalanta is Aglaës, daughter of the emperor Pompeius.

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which some *Jataka* tales also occur. Certain of these venerable stories filtered through to Asia Minor and Europe at a very remote date, a circumstance that explains the similarity or virtual identity which has been noted between several of the oldest Æsopic fables and the Indian tales.[1] Later on they flowed westward through literary channels. The *Panchatantra* was translated in the sixth century into Pahlavi or old Persian, and thence into Syriac and Arabic, under the title of *Kalilah and Dimnah*, from the names of the two foxes into whose mouths many of the tales are put. To English readers this form of the collection is better known as the *Fables of Bidpai* or of Pilpay, after the designation of the Indian story-teller. It was translated into Hebrew by the Rabbi Joel, and from this version into Latin in the thirteenth century by John of Capua in his *Directorium Humanæ Vitæ*, whence, at the invention of printing, it found its way into a number of European languages. North made his Elizabethan version from the Italian, entitling it *The Morall Philosophie of Doni* (1570). But our present concern is with the early diffusion of Indian folk-tales, and more especially with the impulse they gave to moral allegorising.

In these oldest of story-books may be recognised the essential features of plot, motive, and opposition of characters that make up the individuality of a story, whatever the alterations of circumstance, manners, and style, and the differences in length and in degree of elaboration, as it is repeated from age to age and from land to land. Under the adventitious disguise of alien manners and surroundings the reader will hail as familiar friends such tales as "The Ass in the Lion's Skin"; or "The Tortoise, Woodpecker and Antelope," comrades who save each other's lives, the one by gnawing, the second by the cunning use of his wings, the third with his horns; or "The Converted Miser," "The Golden Goose," and others whose very titles are now a proverb. In that far-off age an elephant was said to have enacted the part afterwards assigned to the lion of Androcles; a tell-tale parrot disclosed a wife's infidelity; a lost friend was discovered through singing the refrain of a favourite lyric. There was a wicked Stepmother, prototype of Phædra, an Ugly Bridegroom, a Crow and a flattering Jackal, and the fishes celebrated perhaps two millenniums later in Henry Brooke's charming story

[1] H. T. Francis and E. J. Thomas, *Jataka Tales*, 1916, Introduction.

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of "The Three Silver Trouts." Many of these pithy summaries of the eternally human passed into Turkish and Persian story, northern saga, Germanic folk-lore, Celtic legend, and even traditional history. Of the last-named two good instances are the trick by which a false wife evades the ordeal of chastity, just as Iseult throws dust in the eyes of her husband Mark, and the pristine form of the well-known anecdote of Richard Cœur-de-Lion and Blondel.[1] Lessing, Longfellow, and innumerable other moderns have, with a more deliberate art, reproduced stories found, the bones and sinews of them at any rate, in the *Jataka* and the *Panchatantra*.

Mediæval love of moralisation and the flourishing of allegory

In the disposition to see the moral side of everything, inherited from Anglo-Saxon forefathers, the allegory found a congenial soil. Once implanted, it flourished amazingly. Writers allegorised everything, and found that anything, with a little humouring, was susceptible of allegorical treatment. It has been mentioned already how the moralising mania tried its clumsy hand even on the Arthurian and Grail romances.[2] Yet these, one would imagine, were less intractable than many of the stories in the *Gesta* and its near relation, the *Alphabet of Tales*, stories much closer akin to the licentious *fabliaux* and Poggio's facetious effronteries than to the sacred parables for which they served as substitutes. Everything was grist that came to the compiler of pulpit stories; it was made into passable flour by the simple device of throwing in a handful of didactic meal from the same sack that served for all alike. No tale so stubborn or so intrinsically immoral that the expert casuist could not deduce an edifying lesson in conduct or doctrine. History, that most malleable material of all, afforded him the most instructive themes, for if he spoke of Domitian as a mild and enlightened Christian emperor, or of the Antonines as brutal tyrants, who among his hearers was likely to correct him? It was seldom indeed that he gave up the attempt and fell back on subterfuge, admonishing his flock in the vaguest general terms: "My beloved, the king is Christ, and the son is any bad Christian."

The older didactic story was none the less a work of art because it was applied art. Take any fable of Æsop or Phædrus as a fair representative of ancient Indian apologue and it will be found that

[1] H. T. Francis and E. J. Thomas, *Jataka Tales*, p. 373.
[2] See above, p. 164.

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the external features and the inner meaning are in beautiful equipoise: neither is a mere vamped accompaniment to the other. But the mediæval allegorist had no proper sense of counterpoint. If a homilist, his object was purely utilitarian—the story was the lure, the real object was the moral; the two had somehow to be fastened together. Even allegorical poets were satisfied with an arbitrary correspondence between outward imagery and inward signification; they rarely sought or attained a real harmony. Thus the old stories retold in the *Gesta Romanorum* are mostly spoiled as pieces of significant narrative, and the new are certainly no better; they are curious reflections of the mediæval mind, a clear stage in the movement towards a deeper vitality in fiction, but in themselves they are unpleasing.

As an instance of implicit meaning at variance with the explicit interpretation, take the tale of the soldier tried for a criminal offence, who outwits the judge by certain cunning replies.[1] In the application we are told: "The soldier is any sinner; the judge is a wise confessor. If the sinner confess the truth in such a manner as not even demons can object, he shall be saved." In other words, you are recommended to hoodwink your spiritual guardian so long as you refrain from literal contradiction of the truth. In the new version of Atalanta's race, the hero, who wins the maiden by throwing down the golden balls, is represented as the devil, "who provides various seductions to draw us from the goal of heaven."[2] The legend of Œdipus is turned into an elaborate allegory, in which the child of the ill-fated pair is made to typify the whole human race, which is saved at last by the virtue of a certain talisman—to wit, the Ten Commandments. Even a stranger distortion is that of the story of the chasm which opened in the midst of the Roman forum and could be closed only by the self-immolation of a citizen. Marcus Aurelius volunteers to cast himself into the pit, on condition that he be allowed to indulge himself in every wish of his heart for one year. The incongruousness of the bargain failed to strike the simple-minded moralist, who naïvely observes: "Rome is the world, in the centre of which, before the nativity of Christ,

[1] Chap. lviii. in Swan's translation.

[2] The homily attached to the English version (Herrtage, tale xxxii.) is much more elaborate.

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was the gulf of hell, yawning for our immortal souls. Christ plunged into it, and by so doing ransomed the whole human race." After this there is not much to shock us in the revised version of the Ariadne story, in which the labyrinth is the world ; the Minotaur, represented by an ordinary lion, is the devil ; and the clew of thread is baptism. In the English version the new Ariadne is Eulopia, daughter of a wise emperor Gardinus ; and, being interpreted, she stands for the everlasting life in joy. In later Latin editions she is Aglaës, daughter of the emperor Pompeius, and is called in the application " the lady of comfort," who is the kingdom of heaven.

Still more grotesque is the travesty of a famous historical episode, let the application of which suffice : "My beloved, by Pompey understand the Creator of all things ; Cæsar signifies Adam, who was the first man. His daughter is the soul, betrothed to God. Adam was placed in Paradise (*i.e.* the province of Gallia) to cultivate and to guard it ; but, not fulfilling the condition imposed upon him, like Cæsar he was expelled from his native country. The Rubicon is baptism, by which mankind re-enters a state of blessedness." [1] A highly questionable moral is attached to the story of the golden apple, bequeathed by a certain king to the greatest fool. His executor discovers a province where a new king is chosen annually, receiving the crown on condition that he abdicates at the end of the year. The holder of these ephemeral honours is at once declared to be the fool and is awarded the apple. Taking the hint, our king determines on a flagrant breach of trust. He employs his year in transferring the greater part of his wealth to another land, and so when he lays down the purple he has many years of prosperity before him. "The king," says the moralisation, "who bequeathed a golden apple to fools is God. That apple is the world. The king who reigned for a year is any man who lives in this world (considered with respect to futurity) but as a single hour. Let us then make provision for the future."

Another emperor had three daughters, whose husbands died in the space of one year. He desires them to marry again, but they prefer to honour the memory of their first husbands by remaining single. This admirable motive is stultified by the morality, which

[1] Swan's version of tale xix.

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explains that by the three daughters we may understand human souls, who, through the sin of the first father, were married to three dukes—the devil, the world, and the flesh. In the English *Gesta*, by some mental chicane, the dukes, apparently after penance done, are supposed to image the Holy Trinity. The Latin *Gesta* says flatly: "When they die, that is, when the soul repents of her sins, do not again be united to them." [1] Then there is a king with two marriageable daughters, Rosamunda, whose dowry is her incomparable beauty, and Gratiaplena, who is ugly, but will inherit the kingdom. Contrary to the presuppositions of modern romance, there is a rush of suitors for the dowerless girl, whilst poor Gratiaplena has never an offer, until, at last, "a certain poor nobleman, very wisely reflecting that though the girl was abominably ugly, yet she was rich, determined to marry her. He therefore went to the king and solicited his consent, who, glad enough at the proposal, cheerfully bestowed her upon him, and after his decease bequeathed him the kingdom." Far from rebuking this contemptible fortune-hunter, the moralist commends him, and concludes, with unction: "But the poor in spirit will receive the kingdom of heaven." [2]

The application breaks down and becomes utterly incoherent in trying to moralise the tale of the old knight married to a young and beautiful wife and the young knight married to an old woman. The young husband and the old man's young wife straightway fall in love and come to terms with each other. On a fig-tree outside the lady's window a nightingale sits and sings sweetly, and she rises to listen, for the song reminds her of her absent paramour. But the aged husband, who was surely not one to pity a sparrow, takes his bow and shoots the bird, tearing out its heart and flinging it jeeringly at his wife. Weeping bitterly, she acquaints her lover of the old man's cruelty. The young knight bethinks him of what the husband would do to him if he knew the truth. So he puts on a double coat of mail, slays his sweetheart's husband, and, his own wife dying shortly after, marries the widow. What decent moral could be extracted from this? None, surely, fit for a house of prayer. But allegory is never at a loss. The astonishing conclusion comes pat. The young knight is Moses, the old knight Christ. Moses was wedded to the old law but was in love with the new. The fig-tree

[1] Swan, tale lxxv.; *cp.* Herrtage, tale xliii. [2] *Ibid.*, tale lx.

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was the Cross, and the bird that sang so sweetly the manhood of Christ. "By the lady we understand the soul . . . the which ought to arise from the bed of sin and hear the song of the word of God and of Holy Scripture." Somehow the bird slain by the old knight, who was first identified with our Lord Jesus Christ, becomes identified with Christ, who "there in that tree was slain by men for our sins. And therefore we should wed his wife, *scil.* his law, and lead therewith a peaceable life, and have everlasting life."[1] Thus the laity received instruction in mysterious points of dogma, and it is to be hoped no unintelligent person took the story too literally.

Divine equity is travestied again in the story of a king who was an inflexible judge. It happened that one knight accused another of murder, in this form—"that knight went out, in company with another, to war; but no battle was fought. He, however, returned without his companion; and therefore we believe that he murdered him." The king accepts the inference and commands the prisoner to be executed. But as they approached the place of execution they beheld the first knight coming towards them, alive and well. The judge, annoyed at this irregularity, said to the accused: "I order you to be put to death, because you are already condemned." Then, turning to the returned knight: "And you also, because you are the cause of his death. And you too," addressing the accuser, "because you were sent to kill the first and you did not."[2] It is explained that this insatiable judge is God; the first two knights are body and soul, the third is any prelate. There seems to be a grudge in many of the tales against these princes of the Church. See, for example, the tale of the pirate who said to Alexander: "Because I am master only of a single galley I am termed a robber, but you, who oppress the world with huge squadrons, are called a king and a conqueror." The pirate, who eventually becomes rich and a dispenser of justice, is stated in the morality to be a sinner in the world, while Alexander is any prelate. The monkish scribes show a rooted spite against other members of the clerical profession. It is hardly a compliment to liken zealous preachers to a number of little barking dogs for whom a certain king had great partiality.[3] One day an ass, envying the favouritism shown to the dogs, ran up to the king and raised his clumsy feet with difficulty round the

[1] Herrtage, tale lvii. [2] Corrected from Swan, cxl. [3] Swan, tale lxxix.

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royal neck. The servants, not understanding the ass's courteous intention, pulled him away and belaboured him soundly. This misguided creature, we are told, represents anyone who, without the necessary qualifications, presumes to take upon himself the interpretation of the Scriptures. On the whole it must be said what is euphemistically known as worldly wisdom holds a more honourable place in the ethics of the *Gesta Romanorum* than does any loftier and more altruistic theory of conduct. But it takes all sorts to make a story-book, and a collection that had the large embrace of the *Gesta*, and yet ignored nearly all the subjects handled by the romancers, marked a new epoch in the development of fiction.[1]

The art, however, is rudimentary ; the stories are bare of detail, often indeed mere skeletons. Where there is a good point this is no defect. The following, which is also told neatly by Chaucer, in the "Wife of Bath's Tale," and told, of course, without the preposterous moral, is a good example of the shorter ones. It came from Cicero's *De Oratore* :

Valerius tells us that a man named Paletinus one day burst into a flood of tears ; and, calling his son and his neighbours around him, said, "Alas, alas ! I have now growing in my garden a fatal tree, on which my first poor wife hung herself, then my second, and after that my third. Have I not therefore cause for the wretchedness I exhibit ?" "Truly," said one who was called Arrius, "I wonder that you should weep at such an unusual instance of good fortune ! Give me, I pray you, two or three sprigs of that gentle tree, which I will divide with my neighbours, and thereby afford every man an opportunity of indulging the laudable wishes of his spouse." Paletinus complied with his friend's request ; and ever after found this remarkable tree the most productive part of his estate.

Application

My beloved, the tree is the Cross of Christ. The man's three wives are, pride, lusts of the heart, and lusts of the eyes, which ought to be thus suspended and destroyed. He who solicited a part of the tree is any good Christian.

The "Alphabet of Tales"

Of the same nature as the *Gesta Romanorum* was the *Alphabetum Narrationum*, by the great Dominican preacher, Étienne de Besançon (*c.* 1250 to *c.* 1294), of which an English translation was made in the

[1] *Apollonius of Tyre* was a late insertion in the Continental redactions.

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fifteenth century.[1] In this there is a larger intermixture of Eastern stories, transmitted through Petrus Alphonsus and other gleaners, and also of entertaining and far from edifying tales of the *fabliau* type. But the object is the same—ethical instruction—and the incongruity of tale and application as a rule just as ludicrous. Thus, on the text, *Infirmitatis corporalis aliquando est appetenda* :

We read ex "Dictis Patrum" how some time there was an old man that every year had a great sickness. So it happened a year that he was not sick, and therefore he took a great sorrow and wept, and said unto himself: "Dereliquit me Deus, etc." ("Almighty God has forsaken me, because he visits not me as he was wont") !

The unconscious humour of the following is characteristic :—

Abstinencia moderata pro loco et tempore displicet diabolo

Jacobus de Vetriaco tells how that there was a holy saint that hight Maria de Oginiez, which that oft sithes punished herself with great abstinence. So on a time she refreshed her with meat, and as she sat eating she was ware of the devil ; and with a great countenance and an angry he said unto her, "Behold this glutton ! how fervently she eats !" And she sat still and umbethought her, and knew his falsehood well enough, and ate on. And ever the devil would have let her for to have eaten, because he would she had died for default ; and aye the more he let her to eat, the more she ate. And with a great crying and a noise he vanished away from her, and never after troubled her nor did her harm.[2]

The tale next quoted was long a favourite. It came from an Oriental repertory, and was inserted in the *Decameron*. One variant occurs in Deloney's *Jack of Newburie* (1597), where Jack's wife pretends to have lost her wedding-ring, and turns the tables on her husband in just the same manner while he is looking for it. Much toned down, it was recounted afterwards by Molière in *Georges Dandin*.

Mulier difficile custoditur

Petrus Alphonsus[3] tells how some time there was a young wed man, and through counsel of an old wise man he closed his wife in

[1] *An Alphabet of Tales*, ed. Mary Macleod Banks (E.E.T.S.), Parts I.-II., 1904-1905.

[2] *Ibid.*, xxi.

[3] *Alphonsus de Clericali Disciplina*, a Latin collection made early in the twelfth century from Arabian fabulists by the Spanish Jew, Petrus Alphonsus.

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a high chamber that had no door but one, and a window, and ever as he came either in or out, he sparred the door fast. And on the night he would hide the keys at his bed head. And thus he did a long time. So on a time when her husband was away, she looked forth at the window, and she was ware of a fresh young man, and anon she wax jolious on him. And to the intent that she might get out unto him, iij nights or iiij, by and by she made her husband drunken. And on a night privily when he was on sleep, she stole the keys from his head and opened the doors. And privily she went unto this young man. So her husband wakened and missed her, and compassed that without a cause she would not have desired him to drink so fast on even as she did, and said nothing but lay still and slept. So when she had had her lust, she came in again, and he let as he missed her nought. So on a night afterward, he feigned himself drunken, and the same night she rose up as she did afore, and went unto her love. And anon as she was gone, he rose privily and followed her and came unto the door and sparred it fast, and went up again and stood in the window watching. And at last he was ware of her coming in her sark. And she knocked, and he asked her who was there? And she besought him forgive her that she went forth, and to let her come in. And he said she should not come in, but she should stand still there and he should show her unto her father and her mother in the array that she was in. And the use (custom) was that they that were found thereout at midnight, watchmen should take them and on the morn set them on the pillory, that all men might wonder on them. And when she saw that on no wise he would let her in, she said she should leap into a draw-well that was but a little from the door, and drown herself, rather or she were taken and shamed. And when she saw for all this that he would not let her in, she took up a great stone and cast it into the draw-well, and bade farewell for evermore. And when he heard it fall into the well, he weaned it had been she had leapt into the well, and he was somewhat astonied, and he opened the door fast, and ran unto the well to look if he might get her out. And she had hid her by the wall and saw the door was open, and whipped in and locked the door fast, and gat her up into the window. And when he heard she was gotten in, he said: "O, thou false woman, and full of the devil's craft! Let me come in!" And she said, nay, he should not. And there she held him out until watchmen came and took him, and had him unto prison. And on the morn she went unto her father and her mother, and told them how that he went out on the night to his strumpets and forsook her, and there they came unto the prison all samen and made plaint on him. And there in his sark and his breeks he was set on the pillory, that

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all folk wondered on him, and thus maliciously she put her blame upon him.[1]

An excellent piece of story-telling that might have given Southey the idea of his admirable *Old Woman of Berkeley* is the following:—

Luxuriosam mulierem diabolus ad infernum portavit

We read of a priest's concubine, that when she was boune to die she cried upon them that was about her with great instance, and bade them gar make her a pair of high boots and put them on her legs for they were passing necessary unto her, and so they did. And upon the night after the moon shone bright, and a knight and his servant were riding in the fields together, and there came a woman running fast unto them, crying, and prayed them help her. And anon this knight alight and betaught his man his horse, and he kenned the woman well enough, and he made a circle about him with his sword, and took her in unto him; and she had nothing on but her sark and these boots. And belive he heard a blast of an ugsome horn that a hunter blew horrible, and huge barking of hounds, and as soon as they heard, this woman was passing feared. And this knight speared her why she was so feared, and she told him all; and he alight and took the tresses of her hair and wapped it straight about his arm, and in his right arm he held his sword drawn. And belive this hunter of hell came at hand, and then this woman said: "Let me go, for he comes." And this knight held her still, and this woman pulled fast and would have been away. So at the last she pulled so fast that all her hair brast off her head, and she ran away and this fiend followed after and took her, and cast her overthwart behind him on his horse that her head and her arms hang down on the ta side, and her legs on the tother side. And thus, when he had his prey, he rode his ways, and by then it was near day. And this knight went in the morning unto the town, and he found this woman new dead, and he told all as he had seen, and showed the hair that was wapped about his arm. And they looked her head there she lay, and they found how all the hair was plucked off by the roots. And this happened in the bishopric of Magentyne.[2]

Stories of the Saints

While these magazines of all kinds of stories were being compiled for homiletic purposes, the stories of saints which had hitherto existed in separate lives were being gathered together in collections serving much the same ends. The story of a saint combined the

[1] *An Alphabet of Tales*, ed. Mrs Banks, dxxxviij.
[2] *Ibid.*, ccccclvj.

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appeal of a dramatic and enthralling narrative with the practical inculcation of pure ideals of conduct, cheerful resistance to temptation and unquenchable faith in the promises of Holy Church. It was the custom to read the story or to discourse upon it on each saint's day, and as these sacred festivals increased in number there was a demand for collective hagiographies for the use of the priests. Towards the end of the thirteenth century two such English legendaries were compiled, each probably by a group of monks and other devoted workers : both were put in verse, the one, from the diocese of Gloucester, being written in long couplets, the other, from Durham, in octosyllabic couplets, this latter being in a style fitted for reading or recitation to the laity. The most comprehensive mediæval hagiography was the *Legenda Aurea* (*c.* 1260-1270) of Jacopo de Voragine, afterwards Archbishop of Genoa. This did not altogether oust the native compilations, and, on the other hand, supplied material for further works in the vernacular, such as the northern *Lives of the Saints*, doubtfully ascribed to John Barbour, or John Mirk's *Liber Festivalis* (*c.* 1400), which had a long circulation both in manuscript and in the printed editions. The *Legenda Aurea* was itself translated, through the French, in the earlier half of the fifteenth century. Caxton's *Golden Legend* was based on this and on collation with the original Latin and the French version. It was by far the most popular book issued from his Press.

There had been a great revival of devout interest in the lives and miraculous achievements of the saints during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, part of a wide spiritual movement which was characterised by renewed zeal for the monastic life. As always happens in times of loosened morals, there was especial enthusiasm for women saints, both those whose names had come down from the days of heathen persecution, and the founders of the great Orders of religious women and the mystics and philanthropists of a later era. Two remarkable prose works composed in the early decades of the thirteenth century, *Hali Meidenhad* and the *Ancren Riwle*, are addressed to women : the first is a vehement exhortation on the peace and joy of convent life, and the beauty of virginity as compared with the thraldom, vexations, and ignominies of marriage ; the second is a book of ghostly admonition written for three young ladies who had become anchoresses, and dwells rather on the spirit

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of charity, purity of heart, and love towards God. *Hali Meidenhad* is a coarse and furious invective against the profligacy of the age, from which many men and women could find no refuge but the cloister. The author of the *Ancren Riwle* has more catholic sympathies, wider knowledge of the world, and clearer insight into the heart; his incidental sketches of the chivalrous life of the day and of the common people bear the stamp of truth. This sane and engaging book, one of the best in that large class of treatises on human life which stand in almost a parental relation to the novel, is illustrated with legends and parables which are as apt as they are beautifully told.

Lives of Saints Margaret, Katherine, and Juliana

Lives of three female saints, Margaret, Katherine, and Juliana, were translated from Latin into the vernacular about the same date or a little earlier, in verse or in impassioned, alliterative prose. The motive of all three is the exaltation of virginity, as the crowning virtue and the most excellent oblation to Christ, and as an infallible passport to heavenly bliss. One may be tempted at first to see in all this nothing much better than the grossly materialist balancing of disgusts and disadvantages by the author of *Hali Meidenhad*; or, at best, a violent revulsion from the widespread licence and depravity which were the natural results of incessant war and disorder, and, to no small extent, of a corruption of the doctrines of chivalry and courtly love. But there can be no doubt either of the passionate sincerity of the English story of St Margaret or of the writer's single-hearted worship of purity. The wildly imaginative version he gives of her triumph over her diabolical persecutors is not lacking in sensationalism, but it is entirely free from the pandering to baser tastes which was evident in many of the older saintly romances. Indeed the idealising fervour manifest in the finer legends of saints may be identified with the creative impulse that produced the noble figures of angels, saints, and martyrs in Lincoln, Salisbury, and other Early English and early Decorated churches. Stone sculpture, carved woodwork, wall paintings, and stained glass express the same aspirations, and express them with the same simplicity and energy; and, on the other hand, the grisly and grotesque demons and monsters that appear in gargoyle, capital, and misericord are counterparts in plastic art of the terrific conflicts with devils from hell recounted in the legends.

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St Margaret

Margaret, daughter of a prince and patriarch of the heathen folk, attracts the admiration of the persecuting sheriff Olibrius, who offers to marry her if she be a free woman or to make her his concubine if she be a thrall. Margaret replies that she has devoted her maidenhood to Christ, loving him as leman and believing on Him as lord. Finding her inflexible, Olibrius has her cast into the torture chamber, where her body is scourged till the blood streams down as a stream doth from a spring. The people hide their heads in horror. But the infernal powers ally themselves with Olibrius. Out of a corner of the den comes a wicked shape like a dragon, fire and stench spurting from his mouth. She prays for aid, and holds fast to the token of the holy rood. But the monster swallows the maiden into his wide womb. Then the rood wherewith she was to-weaponed became his bane, so that his body all to-burst, and the blessed maiden went forth wholly unharmed, glorifying her High Healer in heaven. But the brother of the slain fiend assails her with threats and seductions. Him too she encounters with prayers and defiances, and strengthened from above discomfits him so that he begs for mercy. On the morrow, Olibrius has her taken out of prison and cast into the flames. But a dove, burning bright as though it burned, brought a golden crown and set it on her head. "Come," he said, "and rise to the weal and joy of heaven. Blessed wert thou, maiden, that thou chose maidenhood which is queen of all mights, for thou shalt aye without end have bliss." [1]

St Katherine

The people believed in these physical horrors, which took a prominent place in the mystery and miracle plays. In hagiography, from this time onwards, as in the apocalyptic visions which were not less popular, the tortures of hell and of purgatory and the insatiable malice and ferocity of the demons were painted in more and more terrifying detail, until extravagance and absurdity ended in vulgarisation and burlesque. St Margaret was the Lucina of the Christian hierarchy, the guardian saint of women with child, saving the offspring of those who prayed to her from deformity, blemish, or vexation by devils. Hence part of the reason why her legend was a favourite. Margaret's exploits in vanquishing devils were equalled by the feats of another famous saint, Katherine of Alexandria, in putting to shame the learned doctors arrayed against her by the Roman emperor. Katherine was a child of romantic tradition, and probably originated in memories of the brilliant neo-Platonist,

[1] *Seinte Marharete, the Meiden and Martyr*, ed. O. Cockayne (E.E.T.S.), 1866.

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Hypatia of Alexandria, whose career presented the pagan obverse to hers. Her story, first occurring in a ninth-century collection of Greek legends, was elaborated by hagiologists and became current not only all over Europe and the East but in a number of Middle English versions :

Katherine is the orphaned daughter of noble and wealthy parents in Alexandria under Maxentius, a persecutor of the Christians ; she has been brought up piously and is well versed in the learning and dialectics of her time. Indignant at the savage and impious conduct of the emperor, who slaughters hecatombs of cattle to the heathen gods and forces the Christians to take part in the sacrifice, she confronts and denounces him. He is equally amazed at her eloquence and at her beauty. He summons fifty of the most learned clerks from all parts of the realm to dispute with her. They respond reluctantly and contemptuously to his summons ; but, instead of confuting the maiden with ease, they are instantly converted, for the angel of the Lord has visited Katherine and poured streams of powerful words into her mouth. Her rhetoric may be compared with the more dramatic word-play of the martyr and the demon in the legend of St Margaret. Maxentius, in fury, has the men of learning thrown into the fire. But the flames injure not a hair of their heads, their clothes are unsinged, and the martyrs lie as in a sweet slumber like lily laid by rose. The Christians bury them. Again the emperor appeals to Katherine, offering to have her adored as a goddess. She replies that she is espoused to Christ. She has wedded Him to her maidenhood with the ring of right belief. The irate monarch has her stripped and beaten with scourges, and then cast into the torture chamber. Meanwhile his wife has dreamed of Katherine crowned in paradise. She visits the maiden, and finds her nursed and anointed by angels, so that her wounded flesh has become more fair. The empress and two hundred knights renounce paganism. Christ appears to Katherine, and exhorts her to stand firm, since at her death she will be translated to heaven. Nor is her end long delayed. At the advice of a cruel prefect, the emperor has a fearful engine prepared, to which the martyr is tied. But an angel shatters the engine, and four thousand of the accursed folk are slain by the flying splinters. Others, including the empress, upbraid the emperor ; the empress is hurried away to torment and death, and more of the emperor's knights are martyred. Finally, Katherine is led forth to be slaughtered, and a voice is heard from heaven, " Come, my beloved leman, come now, my spouse, most beloved of women. Lo, the gate of everlasting life abides thee full

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open." From her neck when she was beheaded sprang out milk mingled with blood, a witness of her pure virginity; and flights of angels bore her body away to be buried on Mount Sinai.[1]

St Juliana

Like Margaret and Katherine, St Juliana is a fabulous personage. Her story had been told long ago by Cynewulf, but, like that of her two compeers, might have been celebrated more fittingly by the author of the epical *Judith*:

Juliana, a highborn virgin, is bidden by her father to accept as husband Eleusius, friend of the emperor Maximian. She declares that she is wedded to one who is unlike all worldly men. Her father has her stripped and beaten with rods, and hands her over to Eleusius, who brings her before his judgment seat, and the two hold a debate, in the fashion characteristic of these legends. Juliana is again cruelly beaten. Boiling brass is poured over her, but she remains unscathed. When they cast her into prison, Belial visits her in the likeness of an angel, and announces that she has suffered enough, and that she may yield now to Eleusius. But she prays to Christ to be told the truth, and seizing and binding the devil makes the impostor confess his misdeeds. He is the fiend that betrayed Adam and Eve, spoiled Job of his possessions, caused John to be beheaded and Stephen to be stoned. He reveals all the secrets of hell; how he turns the thoughts of the faithful to vain things, but is put to flight by those who are firm and call upon God for aid. At last, seizing a great chain, Juliana binds the fiend and belabours him; and when she is led forth from the prison she drags the evil one along with her. After a vehement speech before Eleusius, she is bound to a wheel like that of St Katherine, and torn to pieces by the spikes. But an angel stays the wheel, and makes her flesh whole. After another oration, the very executioners are converted, and five hundred of the bystanders are turned to Christ. She is thrust into a great fire, but an angel quenches every spark. They put her in a vessel full of boiling pitch, but it is only as a warm bath to her, though it scalds her tormentors. At length, having commended her soul to God, she is beheaded, and passes to endless joy. A blessed woman takes her body by sea to Campania. The pagan judge pursues the boat; but a storm sinks his ship, and he is drowned with his company, their bodies drifting to land are devoured by wild beasts, and the unhappy souls sink to hell.[2]

[1] *The Life of Saint Katherine*, ed. E. Einenkel (E.E.T.S.), 1884.
[2] *The Liflade of St Juliana*, ed. O. Cockayne (E.E.T.S.), 1872.

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The lives of native saints were as a rule more sober, because they were at least semi-historical; though of course the longer they had been subject to the adventures of monkish tradition the further were they removed from fact and credibility. Compared with the legends of Becket, any life of St Dunstan was a tissue of marvels. Whatever their origin, the English lives of saints were all derived from Latin records. Those which had come down from remote times and from Southern Europe, Africa, or the East were not only more romantic in their original form but naturally afforded more scope for imaginative treatment.

"Mandeville's Travels"

One of the earliest to treat with quiet irreverence and incredulity the pious asseverations of the legendaries, as well as the high-flown sentiments and wild inventions of the romancers, was the author of *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, of which the oldest French manuscript dates from 1371, and the first English translation from about the end of the century.[1] Two, or possibly three English versions were in circulation during the fifteenth century, the literary merits of which have conferred upon the book some right to be regarded as an English classic. No doubt the author was the Liégeois, Jean d'Outremeuse; but the hero and professed autobiographer was an Englishman; and there is little reason to reject as fiction Jean's statement that Sir John Mandeville played the Alexander Selkirk to his Defoe, or the Baron Munchausen to his Raspe.

In the prologue Mandeville pretends to be retailing the valuable information gained in his travels for the guidance of intending pilgrims to the Holy Land; but this is only the first of his flams. His description of the various routes to Jerusalem is a mere pretext for a complacent account of extraordinary sights, strange experiences supposed to have befallen him, and astonishing reports that have come to his ears. When he finds that the Palestine tour does not allow canvas enough for his inexhaustible yarns he takes in a wider sweep—the Indies, the isles of Lamary and Java, the realm of Cathay, and the land of Prester John. There is no occasion to suppose that either Mandeville or his editor had really performed these

[1] *Mandeville's Travels*, ed. P. Hamelius (E.E.T.S.), 1919-1923, Part II., Introduction, p. 14, where 1366 is suggested as a probable date for the original edition.

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voyages or travelled farther than the city of Liége. All the requisite erudition was available, not merely in recent travel books, such as the Franciscan Odoric de Pordenone's narrative of his missionary journeys to the East and William of Boldensele's itinerary to the Holy Land, from both of which Jean pillaged at will, but also in the regular books of reference of the Middle Ages, above all, the encyclopædic compendiums of Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum Naturale* and *Speculum Historiale*, in which the learning of a host of authorities, ancient and modern, was condensed in a portable form ready for anyone's use at second-hand.

Jean d'Outremeuse appears to have been an industrious and entirely unscrupulous writer, author of a metrical *Geste de Liége* and of a *Myreur des Histors*, in which he gives an inconsistent account of his dealings with Mandeville, and also, probably, of a trilogy of romantic poems on Godfrey de Bouillon and the Crusades.[1] Himself a maker of romances in the obsolescent style, he would have at his finger-ends all the scraps of tradition, the prodigies, the tales of magic, the fables of monstrous beasts and men, the miraculous relics, which were the stock-in-trade of romancer and saint-monger, from the Pseudo-Callisthenes to the *Golden Legend*. Whatever weight may be attached to his late editor's contention that *Mandeville's Travels* is animated by hostility to the see of Rome, that the book is "an anti-Papal pamphlet in disguise,"[2] there can be no denying the general tone of sceptical raillery, of furtive irreverence, about things which the contemporary world staunchly believed in and fondly idealised. The insinuations, showing a Wycliffite tendency, aimed at the holy chair, are but a single phase of the veiled ridicule which characterises the book from beginning to end. Satire of this heretical kind had to be surreptitious; it was necessary that nothing should be said explicitly that an enemy could seize upon, at a time when scepticism and mockery were dangerous. But it is there to be read, at this safe distance of time, by everyone who is not hypnotised by the preconception that Jean d'Outremeuse was a fool as well as a liar, and that the figure of Mandeville represents himself instead of being a stalking-horse. For the purpose nothing could be better devised than his Defoe-like manner of

[1] *Mandeville's Travels*, ed. P. Hamelius (E.E.T.S.), 1919-1923, Part II., pp. 11-12.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

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conscientious reporting, his attitude of the child-like observer. It is difficult to convict a man of laughing in his sleeve. *Mandeville's Travels* was a product of the country where the ironic comedy of *Reynard the Fox* originated and of the bourgeois classes for whom the anti-romantic *fabliaux* had been written. Jean d'Outremeuse was the Erasmus or Anatole France of a simpler age. He wrote as he did to please his public ; he wrote with his tongue in his cheek because the tales pleased him in a different way.

Among many other holy places Mandeville visits Sinai, where is an abbey of monks and the church of St Katherine. On the summit of the mountain where the angels buried the virgin saint there now stands no church or chapel : Mandeville explains that it was on another summit bearing the same name that the Ten Commandments were given to Moses. He is shown the reliquary enshrining St Katherine's bones. When rubbed with a silver instrument they sweat a liquid like oil, full of a sweet smell, and highly prized by pilgrims. Mandeville was also shown the saint's head, and the cloth in which her body was wrapped when the angels brought it to Sinai : it was still all bloody. Behind the altar was pointed out the burning bush in which the Lord appeared to Moses. Miracles of this religious sort predominate in the earlier portion ; the rest of the book is fuller of miscellaneous loot from the romances. But before the trip to Sinai there is a long passage that brings up recollections of Renaud de Beaujeu and the *fier baiser*. It is about a lady in the island of Lango, or Cos, daughter of Ypocras, who was changed by Diana into the likeness of a hideous dragon, until such time as a knight should be found so hardy as to kiss her on the mouth, when she would be restored to her woman's form again. How the knights who attempt the adventure are panic-stricken when it comes to the point is related with Mandeville's peculiar humour.

Among the sources for the marvellous accounts of the East one recognises at once the apocryphal letters of Alexander to Aristotle and the *Alexandreis* of Gaultier de Châtillon. The *cynocephali*, the waters haunted by deadly cockodrills, the flat-faced folk, those with their mouths and eyes behind their shoulders, the big-lipped, the great-eared, and many other curiosities of fabulous anthropology, make their appearance here. They are described in the same

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matter-of-fact, sententious manner as were the similar marvels in the Anglo-Saxon *Wonders of the East*. Presently comes that mixture of Biblical and Alexandrian romance, the story of Gog and Magog, the Jews of ten lineages, shut away by God at Alexander's entreaty behind the Caspian Gates. The Alexander legend is again the fountain-head for the long account of the Quaker-like Bragmans, and perhaps suggested the delightful description of Paradise, which, however, Mandeville did not actually visit. "Of Paradise ne can I not speak properly, for I was not there; it is far beyond, and that for-thinketh me.[1] And also I was not worthy. But as I have heard say of wise men beyond, I shall tell you with good will."

Bunyan must assuredly have been acquainted with the episode of the Vale Perilous, which is said to be one of the entries to hell. Of those who venture within, "but few come back of the misbelieving men, ne of the Christian men neither, for anon they be strangled of devils." Mandeville and his company prepare themselves for an emprise as fearful as Christian's traverse of the Valley of the Shadow of Death:

But the good Christian men that be stable in the faith enter well without peril, for they will first shrive themselves and mark them with the token of the holy cross, so that the fiends ne have no power over them. But albeit that they be without peril yet nathless be they not without dread when that they see the devils visibly and bodily all about them, that make full many divers assaults and menaces in air and in earth and aghast them with strokes of thunderblasts and of tempests; and the most dread is that god will take vengeance then of that which men have misdone against his will. And ye shall understand that when I and my fellows were in that vale we were in great thought whether that we durst put our bodies in adventure to go in or no, in the protection of God. And some of our fellows accorded to enter and some not. So there were with us ij worthy men, friar minors, that were of Lombardy, that said that if any man would enter they would go in with us. And when they had said so upon the gracious trust of God, and of them we let sing mass, and made every man to be shriven and houseled. And then we entered xiiij persons, but at our going out we were but ix. And so we wist never whether that our fellows were lost or else turned again for dread. And thus we passed that perilous vale, and found

[1] *I.e.* makes me sorry.

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therein gold and silver and precious stones and rich jewels great plenty, both here and there as it seemed. But whether it was as us seemed I wot never for I touched none, because that the devils be so subtle to make a thing to seem otherwise than it is to deceive mankind, and therfore I touched none. And also because that I would not be put out of my devotion, for I was more devout then than ever I was before or after.[1]

That last humorous touch would hardly strike Bunyan, who no doubt took Mandeville's narrative at its face value, though not without deducting the liberal discount to which an enemy of Popish superstitions was entitled.

While other story-tellers were endeavouring to edify by tickling the sides of the laity or exciting their dramatic instincts, Jean d'Outremeuse was intent on amusing them under the cloak of edification. It is not, however, the cleverness with which he played his game without being found out that has made the book as interesting now as when it was first issued, if not more interesting, but the human personality that pervades it. Whether Sir John was an original creation or only a portrait, the character is a life-like and delectable one ; and the simple folk who tell him tales, or the outlandish creatures about whom tales are told, are made real by a thousand touches of nature. One cannot but feel intensely sorry for the poor lady turned into a dragon, and share in her bitter disappointment when one after another of her boastful suitors fails at the sticking-point. Another lady of romantic stock who appeals to us as a very real and downright person is the dame of the sparrowhawk. She is no other than Meliador, sister of the Melusyne who was changed into a serpent, fairy ancestor of the Lusignans[2] ; but Mandeville says nothing about her kindred. He relates that beyond Little Armenia men arrive at an ancient castle standing on a rock, called the Castle of the Sparrowhawk :

Where men find a sparrowhawk upon a perch right fair and right well made, and a fair lady of fairy that keepeth it. And who that will watch that sparrowhawk vij days and vij nights and as some men say iij days and iij nights without company and without sleep, that fair lady shall give him when he hath done the first wish

[1] *Mandeville's Travels*, xxxii.
[2] See above, pp. 239-244.

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that he will wish of earthly things; and that hath been proved often times. And one time befell that a king of Armenia that was a worthy knight and a doughty man and a noble prince watched that hawk some time and at the end of vij days and vij nights the lady came to him and bade him wish; for he had well deserved it. And he answered that he was great lord enough and well in peace and had enough of worldly wishes, and therefore he would wish no other thing but the body of that fair lady to have it at his will. And she answered him that he knew not what he asked, and said that he was a fool to desire that he might not have, for she said that he should not ask but earthly thing, for she was no earthly thing, but ghostly thing. And the king said that he ne would ask no other thing. And the lady answered, "Sith that I may not withdraw you from your lewd courage, I shall give you without wishing and to all them that shall come of you. Sir king, ye shall have war without peace and always to the ix degree ye shall be in subjection of your enemies, and ye shall be needy of all goods. And never sithen neither the king of Armenia ne the country were never in peace, ne they had never sithen plenty of goods and they have been sithen always under tribute of the Saracens. Also the son of a poor man watched that hawk and wished that he might achieve well and be happy in merchandise, and the lady granted him. And he became the most rich and the most famous merchant that might be on sea and on earth. And he became so rich that he knew not the M. part of that he had, and he was wiser in wishing than was the king. Also a knight of the Temple watched there and wished a purse evermore full of gold and the lady granted him. But she said him that he had asked the destruction of their Order,[1] for the trust and the affiance of that purse and for the great prise that they should have, and so it was. And therefore look that he keep him well that shall watch, for if he sleep he is lost that never man shall see him more.[2]

Mandeville is remarkably like Defoe in his cunning mixture of fiction and apparently genuine information for the sake of information. He is like Defoe also in being abreast of the latest knowledge of his time, and giving the impression of being ahead of it. An instance is his discourse on the antipodes, with his quaint story of the worthy man who sailed and sailed until one night he came to a land where he heard folk calling the cattle in the language of his own country, and straightway, in alarm, turned the ship about,

[1] The Templars.
[2] *Mandeville's Travels*, xvii.

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and did not reach home again until he had sailed right round the globe and approached it from the other side. The air of cautious scepticism and the gratuitous bits of circumstance in the account of Ararat is very like Defoe :

And there beside is another hill that men call Ararat, but the Jews call it Taneez, where Noah's ship rested and yet is upon that mountain. And men may see it afar in clear weather. And that mountain is well a vij mile high. And some say that they have seen and touched the ship and put their fingers in the parts where the fiend went out, when that Noah said, "Benedicite." But they that say such words say their will. For a man may not go up the mountain for great plenty of snow that is always on that mountain, either summer or winter, so that no man may go up there ne never man did sith the time of Noah save a monk that by the grace of God brought one of the planks down, that yet is in the minster at the foot of the mountain. And beside is the city of Dayne that Noah founded, and fast by is the city of Any in the which were wont to be a M. churches. But upon that mountain to go up this monk had great desire. And when he was upward the iij part of the mountain he was so weary, that he might no further, and so he rested him and fell asleep. And when he awoke he found himself lying at the foot of the mountain. And then he prayed devoutly to God that he would vouchsafe to suffer him go up. And an angel came to him and said that he should go up ; and so he did, and sith that time never none. Wherefore men should not believe such words.[1]

Modern editions of the English Mandeville have been based on one or the other of two manuscripts, each of which has merits of its own. The version in the Cotton manuscript,[2] by a Midland writer, is a very literal and very racy rendering of the French original, though it has many inaccuracies. It comes very near to Defoe in its simplicity and its plausible tone, set off with touches of disinterested observation. On the other hand, the Northern version, in the Egerton manuscript,[3] is more correct and more literary ; it also gives a fuller rendering of many passages, the writer evidently having compared the Cotton text with one of the Latin translations. Nor must it be overlooked that Mandeville was widely read in this

[1] *Mandeville's Travels*, xvii.

[2] This is the version quoted from ; ed. P. Hamelius (E.E.T.S.), 1919-192.. It had previously appeared in 1725 and 1727, and ed. J. O. Halliwell, 1839.

[3] Ed. Sir G. Warner (Roxburghe Club), 1889.

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country in the original, as is shown by the numerous French copies extant which were written in England.

Comic Tales

Until the Tudor epoch there were no short stories in English prose outside the didactic collections, and no long ones, except the prose versions of the romances. We have nothing to set beside the thirteenth-century *cantefable* of *Aucassin et Nicolete*; or those little romantic novels of the following century: *L'Empereur Constant*, *Le Roi Flore et la belle Jehane*, *La Comtesse de Ponthieu*, and the prose *Amis et Amile*; or beside the inferior *Asseneth* and *Troilus* of the fourteenth century, not to mention the admirable *Foulques Fitz Warin*, which is a French work although it originated in England.[1] The French fifteenth century is also ahead in this respect of the same period in our literature, with the *Petit Jehan de Saintré* of Antoine de la Sale; that sarcastic diatribe on wedlock, *Les Quinze Joies de Mariage*, often attributed to the same author, afterwards paraphrased by Dekker in his *Bachelor's Banquet* and by many others; and more especially with *Les Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* (1462), of which la Sale was pretty certainly the chief contributor and the general editor.[2]

There were English stories adapted from the *fabliaux* or written in imitation, but they were in verse, except such as chanced to go into the clerical collections after being more or less ineffectively moralised. Chaucer's are the best. The rude thirteenth-century *Land of Cockaigne* and the *Miller of Abingdon* of later date are not to be compared with the Reeve's tale or those put into the mouth of the Shipman and the Manciple; and there are no English prose tales of that era approaching these. The *Canterbury Tales* are, indeed, among the few perfect models of short stories set in an appropriate framework of character and by-play; Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* had exemplified the less masterly form of disconnected stories succeeding each other without any integrating link. There is a strong flavour of the *fabliau* in two other excellent stories of Oriental provenance: *Dame Siris*, of the thirteenth century, in which a cunning Celestina overcomes the resistance of a merchant's wife to an amorous monk by scaring her with dread of being transformed into a dog; and *The Wright's*

[1] See above, pp. 235-238.

[2] On the question of Antoine de la Sale's authorship of these three books see G. Reynier, *Les Origines du Roman Réaliste*, Paris, 1912.

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Chaste Wife (1462), in which the familiar chastity ordeal is put to amusing service. The beast-folk in Chaucer's "Nun Priest's Tale" are like those so piquantly drawn in the great cycle of *Reynard the Fox*, if indeed the tale is not derived from that far-ramifying story.

Caxton's *Historye of Reynart the Foxe* (1481) was a translation from Gerard Leeu's Low German version of Willem's poem *Reinaert*, not from the French form of the story, which developed on other lines. In this great beast-epic Æsopic fable had been expanded, elaborated, and enriched, until it embraced the whole drama of contemporary life, at least as it appeared to an astute and unromantic bourgeois. As already noted, Odo de Ceriton pilfered something from it; and one episode, how Reynard, by a pious harangue and by playing the confessor, entices Sigrim the wolf into the well so that he can escape in the other bucket, had been used to good purpose in a Middle English *fabliau*, *The Fox and the Wolf*. Not much that is Oriental was left, except the ruins of the framework, in the English metrical version of *The Seven Sages of Rome*, or in the yet more transformed prose adaptation, *The Seven Wise Masters*, which was printed by Wynkyn de Worde, Copland, and their successors in the sixteenth century. The story that forms the setting is about a stepmother, wife of the emperor Diocletian, who tries to seduce a young prince. The tales are told in antiphonal order by the wicked empress, who harps on the fallibility of counsellors, and by the seven sages who are the son's tutors, who dwell on the perfidy of women, until at length her guilt is made manifest. In the many divergent forms, from the old Hebrew version, said to be through Arabic or Persian from the original Indian, to the French, English, Latin, and Italian versions, the tales delivered by these persons vary out of all knowledge; they differ in characters, scenes, nationality, and manners; they differ in almost every feature, except that they remain didactic, and the forensic motive is never quite forgotten.

The intellectual effort required to give point to a short tale is something very different from the imaginative or fanciful invention exerted in carrying on a sustained story of a romantic cast. Chaucer had intellectual grip and imaginative insight in equal measure; his tales are well thought out and are realised as fragments of life. The other poetical story-tellers sometimes approached him and were

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always more successful than their prose rivals, because they were unhampered by a didactic prescription, and wrote only to please themselves and their readers. Given this artistic freedom, a story may be allowed to tell itself; in other words, to take shape and reality in the teller's imagination. The compilers of clerical manuals no doubt flattered themselves that they had a more serious object than mere amusement. They actually had two objects: to teach and to entertain. Rarely had they the intellectual ability to make a story convey its lesson by implication; oftener than not, in truth, they failed to make the moral in the story and the moral in the sermon fit. Trying to do two things at once had the usual result, when the performer is not a man of genius. Unfortunately the better practice of the metrical story-tellers had no effect upon the story-tellers in prose. These considerations and due allowance for the dearth of talent among the writers account for English poverty during the Middle Ages in the short prose story and utter destitution in more sustained fiction not of a romantic kind.

The "Hundred Merry Tales"

The English counterpart of the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, which was the French counterpart of the *Decameron* and the earlier *Cento Novelle Antiche*, is a second-rate production and made of second-hand materials. *A C. Mery Talys* came so late that it almost falls outside the limits of this volume. It has extremely close affinities with the jest-books that were immensely popular throughout the Tudor era; it has indeed been attributed now to John Heywood and now to Sir Thomas More. But since it is only another composite series of *fabliaux* and similar tales, taken from miscellaneous sources, including the *Decameron*, the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, Poggio's and Heinrich Bebel's *Facetiæ*, Sacchetti's *Novellette*, *Till Eulenspiegel* and other magazines of folk-tale, its connection with the literature just examined is very intimate. Further, it has a peculiarly interesting link with the *Gesta Romanorum* and the other repositories of tales with a moral. The absurd interpretations attached to the *Merry Tales* must have been intended as a parody, if perhaps a halting one, of that very ridiculous feature in the story-books preceding it.

The book was printed by John Rastell in 1526[1]; how much

[1] Only one complete copy is known, and that is in the Royal Library of the University of Göttingen. It was reprinted by Dr Herman Oesterley (1866). The edition by W. C. Hazlitt (Shakespeare's Jest-Books, 1864, reprinted 1881) is from a defective copy.

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earlier the contents had been gathered together is doubtful. As the title indicates, the tales are all comic. They are brief, some of them very brief indeed, just long enough to deliver the point. A large number, but not all, wind up with a few moralising lines, which are sometimes irreverent, often cynical, oftener trivial and perfunctory, and now and then, apparently, more humorous than was intended. Beatrice, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, says that she had her "good wit out of the *Hundred Merry Tales*." [1] The wit, however, is very unequal and not seldom defective. Thus, after the neat story of the Welshman who had killed a friar and wanted the curate to assoil him because there were two friars, one of whom he let scape, and the one should be set against the other, we are fobbed off with the lame conclusion: "By this ye may see that some men have so evil and large conscience that they think, if they do one good deed or refrain from doing one evil sin, that it is satisfaction for other sins and offences." [2] But other moralisations, which seem at first sight to spoil or miss the point, may be deliberate burlesque. Take, for instance, another gibe at the Welsh. St Peter was annoyed by a crowd of talkative Welshmen and wondered how he could get rid of them. So he went outside heaven's gates and cried with a loud voice, "*Cause bobe!*" which is as much as to say "roasted cheese"; whereupon the Welshmen came running out. "And when St Peter saw them all out, he suddenly went into heaven, and locked the door, and so sparred all the Welshmen out. . . . By this ye may see that it is no wisdom for a man to love or to set his mind too much upon any delicate or worldly pleasure, whereby he shall lose the celestial and eternal joy." [3] Possibly, however, we who are too sophisticated find irony in what is merely a clumsy attempt at summing up. But this is hard to admit when we come to the sage comment on the priest who had confessed two nuns. One of these ladies was youthful and had sinned with a lusty gallant, "in a pleasant herber, and in the merry month of May." Says the priest: "Ye did but your kind! Now, by my troth, God forgive you, and I do." But for the nun of riper years, whose comrade in iniquity was an old friar, in the cloister, in the holy time of Lent, he had no mercy. Hence

[1] Act II., scene 1, l. 128
[2] Tale xxviii.
[3] Tale lxxvi.

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the moral: "By this tale men may learn that a vicious act is more abominable in one person than in another, in one season than in another, and in one place than another." [1]

Seasonable, in times when priestly interpretations of a story were apt to lay more stress on the letter than on the spirit, is the counsel: "By this tale ye may perceive that if Holy Scripture be expounded to the lay people only in the literal sense, peradventure it shall do little good." This tale is of the penitent who had been told to pray, "The Lamb of God have mercy upon me," but came back next year saying, "The sheep of God have mercy." To whom the confessor said: "Nay, I bade thee say, 'Agnus Dei miserere mei,' that is, 'The Lamb of God have mercy upon me.'" "Yea, sir," said the penitent, "ye say truth; that was the last year. But now it is a twelvemonth since, and it is a sheep by this time." More irreverent still is the tale of the friar who was preaching at a man for riding on a Sunday. The man could stand it no longer, and burst out: "I marvel that ye say so much against them that ride on the Sunday, for Christ rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, as thou knowest well it is written." To whom the friar suddenly answered and said thus: "But know ye not also what came thereof? Was He not hanged on the Friday after?" "Which hearing, all them that were in the church fell on laughing." [2]

Ethically the *Merry Tales* are no worse and no better than the tales provided for clerical use: self-interest and worldly wisdom are not given a gloss of sanctimoniousness—that is the main difference. A thoroughly modern anti-romanticism appears in the tale of the squire whose horse took the bit between his teeth and rode into the thickest of the fray—"and the English host followed and had the victory." When, after the field was won, King Edward called the squire and was about to knight him, this prototype of Bernard Shaw's victorious cavalry officer in *Arms and the Man* replied: "If it like your grace to make any one knight therefor, I beseech you to make my horse knight, and not me, for certes it was his deed, and not mine, and full sore against my will." [3] Feminine guile and frailty are often treated in the *Alphabetum Narrationum* and similar manuals almost as cynically as in the *fabliaux*; in the *Merry Tales* there is a larger proportion of such stories, but

[1] Tale lxii. [2] Tale xcii. [3] Tale lxiii.

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the spirit is not more profane. After the tale, told differently in the *Decameron*, of the false wife who sends her husband in her own clothes to keep an appointment with her lover, the prentice, who gives his master a sound drubbing, the conclusion sounds rather too demure : "By this tale ye may see that it is not wisdom for a man to be ruled always after his wife's counsel." [1] But the moralist is more biting when it comes to examples of women's inconstancy and widows quickly consoled. Of the lady who followed her fourth husband's bier and was found bitterly weeping because this was the first funeral of a husband at which she had not already made sure of another, the moral says : "By this tale ye may see that the old proverb is true, that it is as great pity to see a woman weep as a goose to go barefoot." [2] And a story to match it follows forthwith :

Another woman there was that kneeled at the mass of requiem, while the corpse of her husband lay on the bier in the church. To whom a young man came and spake with her in her ear, as though it had been for some matter concerning the funerals ; howbeit he spake of no such matter, but only wooed her that he might be her husband ; to whom she answered and said thus : "Sir, by my troth I am sorry that ye come so late, for I am sped already ; for I was made sure yesterday to another man."

By this tale ye may perceive that women ofttimes be wise and loath to lose any time.[3]

More equal justice is dealt between the sexes in the tale "Of him that would get the Mastery of his Wife" [4] :

A young man late married to a wife thought it was good policy to get the mastery of her in the beginning ; came to her, the pot seething over the fire although the meat therein were not enough sodden, commanded her to take the pot from the fire ; which answered and said that the meat was not ready to eat. And he said again, "I will have it taken off for my pleasure." This good woman, loath yet to offend him, set the pot beside the fire as he bade. And anon after he commanded her to set the pot behind the door, and she said again, "Ye be not wise therein." But he precisely said, it should be so as he bade. And she gentlely again did his commandement. This man, not yet satisfied, commanded her to set the pot a-high upon the hen-roost. "What !" quoth the wife, "I trow ye be mad." And he fiercely then commanded her to set it there,

[1] Tale ii. [2] Tale viii. [3] Tale ix. [4] Tale lxiv.

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or else he said she should repent it. She, somewhat afraid to move his patience, took a ladder and set it to the roost, and went herself up the ladder, and took the pot in her hand, praying her husband then to hold the ladder fast, for sliding, which he did. And when the husband looked up and saw the pot stand there on height, he said thus: "Lo, now standeth the pot there as I would have it." This wife hearing that suddenly poured the hot pottage on his head, and said thus: "And now be the pottage there as I would have them."

By this tale men may see it is no wisdom for a man to attempt a meek woman's patience too far, lest it turn to his own hurt and damage.

The Jest-Books

Not long after the *Merry Tales* was printed a collection of still briefer *Mery Tales and Quicke Answeres*. The latter part of the title refers to the repartee and sharp sayings that were a strong feature in most of the pieces, which were otherwise not very different from those in the earlier compilation. Such, for example, are the quips against physicians: "A physician on a time said to Pausanias: 'Thou ailest nothing.' 'No,' said he, 'I have not had to do with thy physic.' And another time a friend of his said: 'Sir, ye ought not to blame that physician, for his physic did you never hurt.' 'Thou sayest truth,' quoth he, 'for if I had proved his physic I should not now have been alive.' And again to another that said: 'Sir, ye be an old man,' he answered: 'Yea, thou wert not my physician.'" The collection is swollen with anecdotes of historical persons, bits of vernacular gossip, and homely sayings. It is essentially a people's book, and closely akin to German jest-books, such as Bebel's *Facetiæ*, Johannes Pauli's *Schimpf und Ernst* (1522), and the *Pfarrer von Kalenberg*, which had come into vogue at the Renaissance and were soon to be translated or plundered for the benefit of English readers. *Till Eulenspiegel's* merry knaveries were adapted into English in Copland's *Howleglass* (*c.* 1548-1560); there had been a translation printed at Antwerp about 1519, and *The Parson of Kalenborowe* arrived from the same press a year or so later. Those chronicles of satanic roguery, *Robert the Devil* and *Friar Rush*, also came from Continental sources. But native heroes of less malevolent disposition, such as Robin Hood the outlaw and the bold pinder of Wakefield, George à Green, were more in favour. Their histories, reduced to prose and sold as chap-books, were

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derived from the popular ballads of the later Middle Ages ; but the horseplay, the surprises, and the practical retorts in which they abound show the influence of *fabliau* and jest-book. With *Scoggin's Geystes* (1566), *The Cobler of Canterbury* (1590), *Jack of Dover* (1601), *The Merrie Conceited Jests of George Peele* (1607), *Tarlton's Jests* (1611), and the rest of them, we are getting beyond the scope of the present volume, though not outside the sphere of influence where the *fabliau* spirit ruled.

The appetite for jests remained as keen as ever, even when writers showed themselves capable of managing longer and more complicated narrative. At the beginning of Elizabeth's reign Awdeley and Harman enlivened their exposures of the cheats and rascalities of the vagabond tribe with episodes of a like pointed sort ; so did the journalistic crowd who exploited the topic of coney-catching. The best thing in the early part of Nash's *Jack Wilton* is an excellent and elaborate jest. We find it again in the one Elizabethan who achieved the nearest thing to a novel, in Thomas Deloney. In *Jack of Newburie*, in *The Gentle Craft*, and in *Thomas of Reading*, incident after incident is either lifted from the current story-books or devised to the same recipe, and the probability is that very few are original. In the transition from mediæval to modern no genre had a more persistent vitality, and none helped more to bring fiction into immediate contact with actual life.

M. Gustave Reynier[1] expresses the view that the spirit of the *fabliaux*, on the contrary, delayed the advent of the realistic novel and hampered its development. He thinks that the inordinate desire to be amusing diverted writers from the way to realism. They concentrated their efforts on the intrigue and *dénouement*, on comic incident and sheer buffoonery ; the jest, the droll situation, the pointed anecdote sufficed ; there was no desire for life-like drama or faithful portraiture. Nor was there much scope even for invention, since there is a limit to the number of comic plots ; the old ones were used over and over again, in various combinations and permutations ; and, as a matter of fact, most of the stock adventures can be traced back to very ancient origins. Character-drawing was not in request ; the short story does not need it or

[1] *Origines du Roman Réaliste*, p. 22.

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give opportunity for it ; and, indeed, it was very exceptional for the personages in the *fabliaux* and similar farcical tales even to have a name. They were merely common types, and were denominated by their class or their occupation.

Granted that such a generalisation might hold good for French literature, in which a superior kind of prose fiction had had its beginnings as far back as the thirteenth century, and yet did not make anything like the advance that might have been expected, it is by no means certain that it applies to the history of mediæval fiction in England. Except in the romances, which pursued their course at a wide remove from reality, and the short comic or didactic stories, we had no prose fiction in English. Except in these latter, the comic tales more especially, there was no sign of realism or of any care for probability. In short, no motive existed but the desire to be entertaining that was likely to turn writers in this direction. Romantic and heroic story-telling may be as idealistic as you please ; comedy or farce cannot get on without some verisimilitude. A far-fetched joke is no joke at all to the unimaginative. The point has to be driven home, and the most telling point is that which has a personal application. But for the comic anecdote and the jest there would probably at that date have been no fiction of real life whatever. This rudimentary realism came, as it was, very tardily ; but, as has already been observed, it was a beginning, though the results belong to a later age.

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CHAPTER X

THE END OF THE MIDDLE AGES

Evolution of the modern novel does not begin till Tudor times

THE history of the English novel as a thing in being obviously begins with Richardson and Fielding. The history of its evolution into a form entirely distinct scarcely opened till the age of the Tudors. What came before was not evolution, for during the Middle Ages there had been a remarkable absence of development, progress, or any radical change. The early romances are as good as, or even better than the later. It is true that separate stories did tend to coalesce and become unified into cycles, and Malory's *Morte Darthur* is a greater and more complex whole, though not a more homogeneous whole, than the *Queste* or the *Mort Artus*, or the much more primitive tales in the *Mabinogion*. Apart from this the only mediæval approach towards modern fiction was in the short story, and that was an ancient genre, which in mediæval hands showed certainly no advance upon earlier examples. All that the Middle Ages accomplished in this country for the art of fiction was to make a beginning and repeat what had taken place long before elsewhere. Once more poetical narratives were turned into prose; once more romantic stories were compounded out of myth and legend, history and tradition. The romance and poetry of the ancient world were laid under contribution. Eastern fable and fantasy yielded treasure both to the romancers and to the collectors of instances for pulpit use. Then the French *fabliau* and the Italian *novella* began to be borrowed, a practice that was to be continued on more intelligent lines in the succeeding age. But Chaucer's great example of how a novel should be written, *Troilus and Cressida*, and his mastery of the art of the short story in the *Canterbury Tales*, had no effect upon the development of prose fiction. In prose there is nothing at all to set beside these achievements. Mediæval romance was a form of fiction that differed negatively and in no other way from the contemporary poetry. It flourished and came to an end.

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It did not develop into something new or something better ; and when it was outgrown it was simply left behind.

Experiments and adaptations during the Elizabethan age

The reign of Elizabeth was the period when a real process of evolution commenced. The Elizabethans did not succeed in evolving the novel ; but their multifarious adaptations and experiments, their ephemeral successes and abortive efforts, did incomparably more than preceding ages had accomplished in making the novel possible. From now to the advent of Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding was a time when many forms were attempted, of which the fittest ultimately survived. Even the romance of chivalry was not immediately abandoned, but, in the unfettered, unhistorical style initiated by the Spaniards, was taken up again by Sidney and others and combined with the pastoral. Later, under French encouragement, the sentimental-pastoral-heroical romance had a very long run, until itself and its devotees were laughed to death by various parodists.

As already noted, the comic *fabliau* and the jest were not entirely dropped in the new age, but found a place in novels of rude construction and in professedly veracious studies of low life. There was something corresponding also to the didactic tale in the moralising element that entered into such collective story-books as Pettie's *Petite Palace of Pleasure*, Fenton's *Tragical Discourses of Bandello*, or Riche's *Farewell to Militarie Profession*. As to the more ambitious blend of fictitious biography with the dissertation on life and conduct, of which the most famous example is Lyly's *Euphues*, that had no mediæval counterpart, unless it be such treatises as *Hali Meidenhad* or Chaucer's tale of *Melibee*, which had been long forgotten. Its actual progenitor was of course the *Libro Aureo* of the Spanish Guevara. Euphuistic fiction, as also the social tractate and the character, illustrates the intimate relationship between the novel and the essay ; both are interpretations of life, adopting different methods of exposition. The social tractate, in the shape of Awdeley and Harman's beggar-books, the pamphlets on coney-catching, and the nondescript surveys and jeremiads of Dekker, Nash, and Nicholas Breton, especially when something had been learned from the literary example of Spanish rogue stories, led on to the pseudo-biography of noted criminals and adventurers and then to the fully developed naturalism of

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Defoe. Most of the writers named, together with Bishop Hall, Sir Thomas Overbury, Bishop Earle, Samuel Butler, and others, were adepts in the art of character-writing, which had a remarkable vogue. The character is a study of life in a static way, and it was followed by such sketches as the Coverley papers of Steele and Addison, little discourses on the contemporary world, accompanied by dramatic sketches of real life. All these contributed materially to the evolution of that ampler representation and more searching interpretation of life which is given by the novels of Fielding.

The Elizabethans experimented in many kinds of fiction, although fiction was not the literary art in which they achieved distinction. A chief incentive to this experimenting came with the busy period of translation at the beginning of the reign. The Italian *novellieri* provided plots for the dramatists; they also set new standards and introduced better modes of story-telling. French and German writers were not neglected. But the ancient Greek romance and Spanish picaresque fiction had a more potent influence. The effect of the latter on English fiction has perhaps been overrated and was actually by no means so considerable as its results in French literature. When, on the other hand, Heliodorus, Longus, and Achilles Tatius became known in this country their influence on the romancers was profound. Sidney and Greene, to mention no others, show in the very names of their characters, as well as in their addiction to complicated plot, surprising incident, and the supremacy of chance in human affairs, how much they were under the sway of Greek exemplars. Largely as a result of this stimulus from abroad the Elizabethan period was a most fruitful and decisive era in the history of the novel, although it failed to produce a single work of fiction that is still read for its own sake and not merely as an item in literary history.

The three main periods in the history of the English novel

Thus the history of the English novel falls conveniently into three well-marked sections. Mediæval romance is an interesting prologue, to leave which out of account would impair our understanding of much that has happened since. But history begins in quite another sense when we come to the period leading up to the establishment of realism. After that event we may pursue if we like the further course of the modern novel in all its developments,

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including the revival of various discarded forms, which, incidentally, illustrate how mistaken it would be to ignore any of the antecedents, however remote. The history of English prose fiction is one multiform whole. Nowhere is there an absolute break admitting of no return. At first sight the Elizabethan novelists seem to be making a completely fresh start ; so again does Defoe ; but on a closer view it is evident that each new generation is using masses of disintegrated material from its predecessors and accommodating old patterns to new requirements. No complete hiatus occurs at any point.

It is possible even to demonstrate the existence of some threads of continuity between the oldest English fiction and the newest. Mediæval romance was the blood relation of contemporary poetry. There was not much in common with poetry in the novel from Fielding to Thackeray. That was the novel of reason or of common sense. It was curiously lacking in the imaginative, the spiritual view of life which characterised poetry of equal eminence. It was a novel of manners rather than of man, of social relations, not of man's relations to the whole world of existence, to the furthest reaches of his consciousness. When the spirit of romantic poetry began to react upon the novelists, at a time when that poetry seemed to have finished its career, something was recaptured that had long been lost. Fiction came again into close contact with poetry, and with a poetry that was much more philosophical and much more imaginative than that which had anciently given birth to romance. The modern novel, from the Brontës to Meredith, Hardy, and Conrad, became an instrument of vast compass, almost as protean in its manifestations as poetry itself. Imagination, a faculty of wider and deeper vision than the penetrating insight into motive which Fielding called discovery or invention, inasmuch as it contemplated wider regions of consciousness, was restored to the novel, not to waste itself in mere libertine romance, but to find adequate expression in a synthesis of reason and creative energy, of the prose and the poetry of life. Given the necessary genius, there is hardly a theme that the modern novelist finds beyond his range. His art is as flexible and capacious as the neutral style, "common to prose and poetry," which was the special admiration of Coleridge in Wordsworth and certain other poets. Prose fiction

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had its rise in poetry : it has reasserted its kinship to poetry. Its history is not a broken but a continuous curve.

The differentia of modern fiction—not realism, but a significant relation to actual life

The history of the modern novel begins when Defoe, in homespun narratives that decked out history with fiction or disguised fiction as matter of fact, almost as it were by accident, produced the realistic story, and was followed by Richardson and Fielding, who gave fiction an intellectual meaning and an artistic scheme. Realism was for a while the first and the last canon of prose fiction. But, consistently with what has just been said, it cannot be held that realism is the one differentiating principle of the modern novel. Modern fiction has not remained simply and solely realistic, a patient transcript of life or a rationalised reading of actuality. There have been latter-day romances ; there have been novels saturated with poetry. Yet, even when most romantic, modern fiction has differed radically from that of olden days. At its most poetical it has followed the guidance of imaginative vision, not the lure of random fancy. Its distinctive aim has been to hold a definite and significant relation to actual life. It is serious, not trivial ; historical, not fantastic ; not a thing only of sensation and instincts, but rational. To sum up, modern fiction strives, as poetry and drama strive, to master and simplify nature's raw material in the service of art, of poetic truth, and has often succeeded, although the task has been harder than theirs for the very reason that makes it look easier—namely, that the fabric into which the novelist weaves his creations is so hopelessly like the fabric of everyday life.[1] For which reason even a Thackeray sometimes fails to distinguish art from nature, and walks into his story as if he had been called in as a peace-maker in a family squabble or invited to lecture a scapegrace nephew. How many lesser novelists have played Partridge to their own dramatisations of life !

Early fiction lacked seriousness

Early fiction was without this settled relation to life. Only the finer sort of poets displayed it, because they had the right vision. If now and then, in the Grail romances, for instance, or in a stray chronicle of confused but vivid reminiscence, such as the saga of Fulk Fitz Warine, there is more than a touch of high seriousness,

[1] "Imitation, as opposed to copying, consists either in the interfusion of the same throughout the radically different, or of the different throughout a base radically the same" (Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, xviii., n.).

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it is caught from poets whose imagination saw more truly than the gay and frivolous romancing of the entertainers. Romance of the old stamp would have been pronounced by Coleridge a product of the fancy, not of the imagination. Tales were told in the Middle Ages chiefly as a pastime for vacant minds or to pamper an omnivorous curiosity. When relaxation was the prime object, any material that came to hand, marvels and magic, history and legend, was put into requisition. When the end proposed was edification, entertainment continued to be the means: the moral was tagged on, like the answer to a conundrum—it was rarely implicit. Often enough the moral was a mere sham, and worth exactly as much as the romancer's formal assurance that he had got his matter from the best authorities. The public wanted stories; the romancers had stories to tell—and their living to get. Hence, while the edification was as often as not only a pretext, the historical guarantee yet oftener was only a licence to give a new, true, and particular account of what had never happened save in Broceliande or the domains of Prester John.

History and fiction not yet distinguished: no free invention

With this unquestioning avidity, this bland curiosity, so undiscriminating and so easily satisfied, to the popular mind in the Middle Ages history and romance came to much the same thing. There was a child-like appetite for information, and a comfortable willingness to leave the question of true or false alone. The minds of the great majority were at that stage of development when, beyond the sphere of their own daily concerns, the distinction between the real and the merely imaginable is not yet clearly established. They did not ask even for verisimilitude. But it does not follow that arbitrary invention was allowed free rein. Fielding has drawn a sharp distinction between invention, as he understood the word—that is to say, discovery, or perception of truths not visible on the surface—and the invention which merely devises fresh incidents and fabricates plots.[1] The latter he was nothing loath to resign to the romancers. But while invention, in this philosophic sense, of

[1] "By invention, I believe, is generally understood a creative faculty, which would indeed prove most romance writers to have the highest pretensions to it; whereas by invention is really meant no more (and so the word signifies) than discovery, or finding out; or to explain it at large, a quick and sagacious penetration into the true essence of all objects of our contemplation" (*Tom Jones*, xii. 1).

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insight into the hidden springs of action, was utterly beyond the scope of the primitive retailer of stories, yet invention in the more colloquial sense was by no means his acknowledged prerogative.

Reliance on authority: reluctance to alter or innovate

The less critical men are the more slavishly do they rely on authority. It is the credulous mind that gets uneasy at any swerve from the original deposition. Make the slightest change in the well-known lines of a fairy-tale and your childish listener is up in arms at once. So, too, the mediæval chronicler of fact or fiction who departed from the familiar order of events or introduced novelties into an accepted story did so at his peril. Minds with no other criterion than custom and tradition clung to this as unreflectingly as their modern compeers cling to their belief in whatever they have read in print. Hence even such a poet as Chrétien de Troyes, who was not incapable of dramatic truth, never, so far as can be verified, tampers with the sacred record that has come down to him. He amplifies and interchanges and embellishes, to be sure; he makes intelligible and life-like where he can; but alter or omit?—ah, no! Rather will he let uncouth incidents, of the inwardness of which his prosaic mind has never an inkling, work havoc with probability and even with common sense than take risky liberties. Originality was the last thing that he and his like would lay claim to. Historical truth may be little more than blind adherence to what someone has said already; but imaginative truth is not on competing terms with it. Even Chaucer repeats the consecrated formulas, and, after quietly lifting the plot of *Troilus and Cressida* from Guido and Benoît, refers ostentatiously to the non-existent Lollius:

> For-why to every lovere I me excuse,
> That of no sentement I this endyte,
> But out of Latin in my tonge it wryte.

Unconscious development, not conscious invention

Thus the paradox is after all not very surprising that overt invention was not in good credit with these idle singers of an empty day, or with those who in cold prose retold their tales with what at first appear such arbitrary divagations. Geoffrey of Monmouth, far more than those who repeated the Arthurian story at several removes, must have been conscious that he was putting his hand to romantic history; no mediæval writer, on the other hand, ever

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dreamt of anything so revolutionary as historical romance. Geoffrey was accused of wilful fabrication; yet even he, the most high-handed of the pseudo-historians, perhaps did little more than manipulate, dress up, and unite disconnected legends into an epical narrative. Thus it was not invention prepense that originated or developed the legends. Legend is a fluid thing, in a continual state of expansion. Creative imagination worked upon the mass as a fertilising leaven; but it worked insensibly, without purpose or plan. New turns were always being given to old incidents, and well-known stories improved with fresh detail, especially by the unconscious rather than the furtive method of transfer from other stories. A tale might be regarded as the common property of the literary guild; but every guildsman who told it felt some obligation to hand it on a little more complete than he received it. All the same he would never acknowledge that he had invented a thing; at most he would consider that he had furbished up finer figures of Tristan, Perceval, or Huon, made them do what they must have done in the circumstances, say what they ought to have said to express the situation, or at most fight combats a little more prodigious and play the lover with superior grace. This was something essentially different from improvising a brand-new story, or even from recasting an old one to fit a symmetrical plot. As to letting a group of characters evolve a life-like story by acting according to the dictates of their own natures, as imagined by their creator, that was a conception for the distant future. Even such a thorough-going mediævalist as William Morris was far more emancipated than the most enterprising of the romancers whom he imitated, for he remoulded ancient stories and invented new episodes whensoever he listed, and was more concerned to have the picture right than to be faithful to any established canon.

The beginnings of free invention

A time arrived when intelligent readers began to be aware of the wide distinction between a good story, however long repeated, and history based on attested fact. When Caxton printed Malory he addressed a preface to two sorts of readers: first, to such as might perchance have heard expressed disturbing doubts whether there had ever been a real King Arthur, to whom he pointed out divers evidences of the worthless, time-honoured kind; and, second, to such as were willing to read but not to believe. "And

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for to pass the time this book shall be pleasant to read in, but for to give faith and belief that all is true that is contained herein, ye be at your liberty." [1] The hour had struck for the romancer to throw off the historical pretence, and instead of losing by the change he found that he had gained. Invention was now permitted ; before long it was expected and demanded. The Amadis and Palmerin romances, *Arthur of Little Britain*, the *Arcadia*, and the novels of Greene, Lodge, and other Elizabethans were all planned out on newly devised if conventional lines. The situations, the adventures, the types of personage, the kind of deeds they performed and the kind of life they led were of the old stamp ; but the actual course of the tale was at the romancer's discretion, and, if he did not show any great brilliance in its conduct, the fact that this was now admittedly his business had decisive results. Unexpectedness and originality acquired a merit they had not enjoyed since classical times. All possibilities were open. Henceforth fiction could concentrate on incident and adventure, in the fashion of old romance, and either weave these into an ingenious pattern or spin them out in an aimless, endless string ; or it could bring in the new interests of personal character and of the things actually going on in the world, reducing the mere story to a minimum. The novel of intricate complication and dramatic disentanglement on the one hand, and the plotless, almost storyless novel of ultra-modern naturalism on the other, were alike rendered possible by the new liberty.

This is a turning-point in the history of fiction. The stage of unconscious growth has come to an end ; the era of conscious art is in view. But the mere licence to create or reconstruct at will did not of itself impart more seriousness to fiction ; that could only

[1] See also Berners's prologue to his translation of *Arthur of Little Britain*: "For I thought it should have been reputed but a folly in me to translate by seeming such a feigned matter, wherein seemeth to be so many impossibilities: how be it then I called again to my remembrance that I had read and seen many a sundry volume of diverse noble histories, wherein were contained the redoubted deeds of the ancient invincible conquerors, and of other right famous knights, who achieved many a strange and wonderful adventure, the which, by plain letter as to our understanding, should seem in a manner to be supernatural; wherefore I thought that this present treatise might as well be reputed truth as some of those; and also I doubted not but that the first auctor of this book devised it not without some manner of truth or virtuous intent; the which considerations, and other, gave me again audacity to continue forth my first purpose till I had finished this said book."

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come with the perception of some aim beyond mere entertainment. For a while the break with obsolete conventions made rather for less seriousness, romance being conceived as entirely divorced from history and reality. Free invention exercised itself at random. Stories were told for the mere sake of story. Fiction became fantastic, more unlike reality than ever. But fiction had at last achieved the great step of no longer having to pretend that it was not fiction. The stupendous edifice of legend and fable that had delighted the Middle Ages lost most of its fascination as soon as it lost its credit. New themes and new methods were in demand, and the Elizabethan story-tellers did their best to supply the want.

Thus the issue of Malory's *Morte Darthur* from Caxton's Press is the landmark between ancient and modern. This was the last of the old fiction and, in the light of Caxton's preface, the first of the new. It is the culmination and summary of mediæval romance, whether in prose or verse, and it is the first work of prose fiction in English that can stand on its own merits. The earlier chapters of this volume have been devoted to the origin and growth of the mass of legend and romance out of which Malory compiled his book. Perhaps it may seem as if overmuch space has been allotted to the subject. But it was not without reason. The growth of Arthurian romance, from its hazy beginnings in myth and folk-lore to its embodiment in a single orderly narrative by Malory, is the most interesting example of a process that was typical of the history of all early romance. Not all the old stories received so shapely a final embodiment in prose. Nevertheless in every literature it is the normal course for history and pseudo-history, legend, myth, and even contemporary incident and contemporary gossip, especially from the life of the great—for in the absence of the journalist romance was even more receptive than the novel is now—to be moulded into romance and cycles of romance, and finally to be reduced to prose for private reading. To follow out the process in every case would be to tell the same tale over and over again.

This process, almost an unconscious and involuntary process of growth, is an authentic example of what some literary historians call communal origins. Good sense rebels at the theory that a crowd of people could collectively and without premeditation bring into existence so artificial a thing as a piece of verse, let alone a work of

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disciplined art such as a fine ballad. But thousands could repeat a traditional story, which would be altered in countless details and, in the long run, probably improved the oftener they retold it. The name of the exceptional person who put the said story into verse might be remembered ; but it does not follow that the authors of metrical romances, which have survived as wholes because they were in rhyme and easy to get by rote, should be credited with the constructive work that was going on all the time ; much of it was doubtless done by the anonymous crowd. We must content ourselves with the reasonable conviction that there were many fabulators, and with knowing the bare names of Bledhericus and Kiot, trusting that these are more authentic than "Hélie de Borron" and "Luces de Gast," who are mere names. Even during the later stages of development, while there was no premium on invention and no glory attaching to mere rehandlings of what was at anyone's disposal, the share of the individual author in the expansion of each great legend passed with little or no applause.

It was the same, or even more so, with the other species of fiction that flourished in the Middle Ages. Rarely if ever is it possible to point out the original author of a good story ; it is usually very difficult to say for certain when, where or even in what language and country it started on its unending career. Many of the heavier didactic pieces can be assigned to earlier writers of more or less repute ; but these as a rule are not to be described as good stories. The anecdote, the fable, the Eastern wonder-tale, the *fabliau*, the germs of *novelle* and of plots and episodes in many longer narratives are no doubt also, in very large proportion, of communal origin. They were bandied about from mouth to mouth, from nation to nation, from one collection to another, and in the course of this ceaseless transit underwent continual transformation without entirely losing their recognisable lineaments. The same vicissitudes attended the transmission of the lives of saints. These, too, were continually being improved and embellished and adapted to the faith and the manners of succeeding ages, until the kernel of truth, when there was any, is hard to discover. No mediæval literature, not even poetry, was more responsive to the changing temper and imagination of the age than the fiction which has been preserved for us in prose.

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Comparison of fiction with the plastic arts

One corollary of this general truth is that a parallel to the different phases of mediæval fiction is furnished by the successive phases of mediæval plastic art. These are exhibited in the sculptures, the stained glass, the wall-paintings, and other ornaments of contemporary buildings, and in the illustrations and decorations of manuscripts, in tapestries, and in certain other works in which the representation of living forms was a chief element. Of the Anglo-Saxon period hardly enough has survived the ravages of war and time to afford a very telling illustration ; and the Norman period was comparatively barren, its barrenness corresponding to the dead time in literature. But from the thirteenth century onwards the comparison is very fruitful. The age of romance was the age of lofty idealistic representations in sculpture, glass-painting, and other kinds of freehand and colour. With progress in technical dexterity came a richer elaboration, an enthusiastic reproduction of natural forms, a romantic prodigality and splendour correspondent to the prevailing qualities in literature. Then the growing interest in common life is clearly displayed in the readiness to accept as model any striking object, sacred or profane, vulgar or grotesque, that happens to present itself. Monumental effigies and window portraits cease to be mere ideal figures and exhibit all the characteristics of faithful portraiture. Scenes from secular as well as religious story appear in sculptured groups and in the panels of stained-glass windows. The age of romance is succeeded by the age of realism.

Anglo-Saxon art

In Anglo-Saxon art, figure-work, which of course affords the most apposite comparison, was subordinate to decorative pattern, though to a varying extent according to the dominance of different styles. In the early Anglian crosses, such as those at Ruthwell and Bewcastle, and in some other carvings, an approach to classic grace and finish shows the strength of the Greek influences which had accompanied the introduction of Christianity, if it does not prove that Greek artificers were actually at work in Northumbria. During the four or five centuries that ended with the full establishment of Norman architecture and Norman fashions of decoration various waves of influence modified the native English style, which in itself mingled heathen and Christian elements. Thus on the shaft of the beautiful cross in the churchyard at Gosforth, in Cumberland, are carved reliefs illustrating the Norse *Edda*. Pres-

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ently Viking and Celtic motives are found in combination, for abstract design was the basic principle in both. Complicated pattern-work, interlacing knots, winding stems and scrolls filling out a given space were characteristics of the resulting style ; and there was no imitation of natural objects except conventional forms of vegetation, and birds and beasts scarcely more realistic than symbols or hieroglyphs. The same kind of designs appear in the beautiful illuminated manuscripts that have survived, for example, in the *Lindisfarne Gospels* (*c.* 700), which is Celtic in its decorations, and only and but little inferior in this category to the magnificent *Book of Kells*. It contains, however, four miniatures in the Byzantine portrait style, which betray a totally different impulse emanating from an alien school of art.

In the tenth and eleventh centuries there was a revival of art in Wessex originating in the Carolingian renaissance across the Channel : this was largely inspired by Greek æsthetic motives and standards of craftsmanship. The intricate spirals and interlacing bands of Celtic decoration were not discarded, but the patterns were simplified ; and, on the other hand, Greek iconography gained the ascendancy. Some success may be discerned in the modelling of figures, some in the expression of individuality ; there were even attempts at perspective in small dramatic groups. Sculptured figures of considerable artistic attainment remain from this era, together with more complex carvings on ivories of incidents from religious history, some remarkable paintings, and illuminations enshrining portraits and Biblical scenes showing late classical or Byzantine origins. Favourite subjects were the Crucifixion, the Virgin and Child, the raising of Lazarus, and similar episodes of sacred story, and the persons of apostles, saints, and angels. The romanticism of Cynewulf's hagiographical poems and the gorgeous colours in which the *Dream of the Holy Rood* is depicted are the literary expression of these Continental influences.

It is noteworthy that the two extant manuscripts of the *Wonders of the East*, one dating from the very beginning, the other considerably later in the eleventh century, are both illustrated with figure drawings of the semi-human creatures described. Those in the former are rough and clumsy in conception and execution ;

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the others are better drawn and show some observation of animal and human forms. A style of illustration that was now coming into vogue, and which not only lasted for a century or two, but even had its effect on the draughtsmanship of Gothic illuminators, was the outline drawing, seen at its best in the psalters and other books emanating from the Winchester scriptorium. These line-drawings are full of action and are not without delicacy, though the attitudes and proportions of the figures are often violent and awkward. Their affinity to the Wessex sculptures is abundantly evident. Probably the most successful work in this manner is the series of eighteen scenes in the life of the saint contained in the *Cuthbert Roll*, in the British Museum, done in the twelfth century. But the humanism, the love of romantic story, and especially of hagiography, which was finding expression in these plastic forms, received a check at the Conquest.

The Norman period

At first the interest of the Norman mason was concentrated on the building alone, and the earlier structures were plain to severity. But the love of ornament quickly revived. The instincts of his Scandinavian kindred were in the blood of the Norman. In later work of this period the carver was busy on the plain surfaces of columns, on the big cushion caps, the receding orders of the portals, on fonts and corbel-tables ; empty spaces such as tympana over doorways became the receptacles for masses of sculpture. For the most part these decorative carvings were based on inanimate designs or the monotonous repetition of animal figures arranged in symmetrical schemes. Celtic and, still more, Scandinavian motives persisted in the interlacing tendrils and vine-stems, the dragon-work, and the symbolical beasts and human figures wrought on mouldings, shafts, and tympana. The Anglo-Saxon sculptor had fallen into the bad habit of simulating the painter's technique. His carvings on the slabs of crosses or on tablets in the walls of buildings were a counterpart to the historiated letters and the panels crowded with figures set amidst the illuminations on the margins of costly books. So it was also with the Norman decorator, whose groups in low or high relief were more or less of a pictorial character, incised lines often doing roughly what ought to have been done by modelling in the round. The technique was rude, and, though frequent attempts were made to present incidents

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from holy writ, any sort of realism was beyond the reach of the primitive artist, who displayed no lack of energy, but never the grace and finish that come of mastery in a difficult material. Such a notable achievement as the great south porch at Malmesbury is deeply impressive in the richness of its mass of multitudinous sculpture ; but in detail it is a confused effort to represent in stone, and in much the same manner, the scriptural stories related pictorially in manuscripts of the same period.

A new departure

From this time onwards, however, the middle of the twelfth century, the art of the sculptor begins to move in other directions. It moves away from abstract forms of decoration and figure-work that is merely symbolic, and concurrently there is rapid progress in technical accomplishment, which enables it to free itself from modes of representation derived from painting. After a brief period of competition and compromise Gothic art superseded Romanesque. The aim of Gothic art was to express the energy and equilibrium of forces in the structural lines of the building. It was against the genius of the new style to overlay the shafts of columns or encrust the deeply moulded lines of arches with masses of ornament ; in these important members the constructive idea had to be expressed without disguise or impediment. But an appropriate place was found for monumental figures and sculptured groups in the recesses and tiers of niches in the complex fronts, and in such other parts as the spandrels of arches. And as sculpture emancipated itself from the pictorial tradition, and was applied to its proper function—the shaping of figures in three dimensions—it recovered a freedom that was to enable it in due time to become a mirror of the external world and of the world within the soul. Sculpture still subserved the purposes of architecture : in truth, Gothic sculpture, in obeying sculptural rather than pictorial canons, became essentially more architectural. It worked in the material of which the building was constructed, it did not try to complicate and encumber the expressive lines of the fabric ; yet its figures were not detached objects or independent pieces of furniture stationed against an architectural background, but coherent portions of a single great design, giving their proper accent to the general rhythm. Sculpture was a subordinate art which enjoyed autonomy and freedom in its own province.

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Early Gothic art

The idealism of the age of romance is conspicuous in early Gothic art, alike in architecture, sculpture, glass-painting, mural pictures, and manuscript illustration. For a while the figures produced by any form of representation fail, and fail in precisely the same way, to attain the truth and beauty at which they aim. Long and attenuated limbs, a stiff and angular anatomy, emaciated countenances appear in sculpture, in historiated glass, and on the illuminated page. The redeeming features are the ideality of the conception, the refinement of the drawing and modelling, and the manifest sincerity of the feeling expressed. Gradually the workers in all these media attain a finer mastery and delicacy ; their figures are still designed on ideal lines, with few touches of individual expression ; but rounded and graceful contours succeed to the lank features and stiff postures of the earlier work. There is a progressive improvement in mastery and style between the saints and patriarchs filling the innumerable niches on the west front of Wells and the stately angels in the transepts of Westminster Abbey, and between the latter and the glorious seraphim spreading their wings along the arcade of the Angel Choir at Lincoln, where the art culminates in several masterpieces of inspired expression surpassing the finest poetry of that age. At Salisbury, Rochester, Worcester, and Exeter, and in many churches not of cathedral rank, plentiful examples may be seen of this noble and dignified sculpture.

The same idealism is evident in the glass-painting. In this, and in the kindred art of illuminating books, the decorative motive was still supreme, and rightly so. Certain spaces had to be filled with suitable designs ; hence the main object was to devise harmonious patterns, and any tendency towards naturalism was held in check. The effect of perspective was avoided. Thus what may appear as affectation or clumsiness or mere quaintness is usually due to the fact that the artist was not aiming at realism or correctness ; the curving attitudes, the general frontality of the figures occupying a single plane, like actors stepping to the front of a stage, are intentional features of the composition. Thus there was a technical as well as an ideal motive for the willowy, drooping angels, the praying saints and apostles, the kings bending in mercy or adoration. In sculpture and in glass similar subjects are treated : the great

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figures of scriptural history or hagiography, together with many allegorical beings, pairs of antitypes, virtues and vices, with occasional illustrations of secular history and many illustrations of the Apocalypse—always a subject of fascinating interest to the Middle Ages. Close akin in feeling and technique to the pictures set in rich and mellow colour or in grisaille in early Gothic windows are those in the illuminated psalters, Bibles, and books of hours, the art of which is now rapidly approaching its zenith. Wall-painting also comes into the comparison —for example, in the Rochester "Wheel of Fortune" and the exquisite Virgin and Child in a thirteenth-century triptych at Chichester.

Mid-Gothic art

During the latter part of the thirteenth century there was a steady development in all these arts, a development that culminated in the next hundred years. The stiff-leaved carving of plant forms on capitals, corbels, and mouldings is succeeded by the faithful imitation of living foliage and flower, sometimes entwining birds and beasts, or a setting for human heads and compact little scenes that might have come out of a contemporary *fabliau*. This naturalistic art becomes more and more exuberant, until in the later fourteenth century it is the plastic counterpart to the lyrical wantoning in the beauty of nature which inspired many delightful passages in *Gawayne and the Grene Knyghte* and the Thornton *Morte Arthure*, and even in some of the prose romances. Lingering archaism disappears in sculpture and remains only as a pleasing touch of convention in the sister arts. Having realised its freedom as the art of representation in the round, sculpture applied itself to further problems. It studied the expression of the human face ; it revelled in the beauty of voluminous draperies ; it mirrored every aspect of the contemporary pageant of life, and it fashioned mythic figures to express the mystical or grotesque ideas of the religious imagination. Vision and aspiration were the marks of its higher creative works, keen observation kept it firmly attached to earth, a sense of humour restrained it from mere fantasy and absurdity, whilst enlivening its delineations of everyday human life. Licence and extravagance appear at a later period, when the same marks of degeneracy are apparent in the romances.

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Subjects and manner of treatment —drama, story, allegory

The dramatic instinct of the mediæval artist was not satisfied with the mere portrayal of a saint. He was as fond of a story as were the men of letters and their readers, and could not be deterred from attempting to tell stories himself, in spite of the limitations of his art. Some of the results were pleasing enough, but the inevitable end was decadence. The glass-painter was content for a time with representing miracles and other incidents in the life of Christ or an apostle in a series of medallions. Even when the sculptor's art was still rude, groups of figures presenting events in the life of the Saviour appeared in some of the quatrefoils of the Wells façade; and in the capitals within the church, peeping out of the conventional foliage of an early period, are little sketches of peasants with the tools of their occupation, pedlars with their packs, the well-known man with the toothache, and many scenes suggestive of the didactic stories, such as the chastisement of the thief in the orchard, together with bits of animal life that are like illustrations of the bestiaries. At Beverley, Winchester, Tewkesbury, Exeter, and in Cley church, in Norfolk, corbels and bosses are carved with picturesque scenes apparently from current legends and tales, largely of secular character. Apocalyptic literature was drawn upon for innumerable scenes, from the Dooms of Anglo-Saxon and Norman times to the terror-striking representation of the Judgment Day and the punishment of the damned in the great west window at Fairford, executed late probably in the fifteenth century. This was a favourite subject for sculpture, stained glass, wall-painting, and the illuminator. Scandinavian motives are perhaps discernible in the dragonish spouts, gargoyles, and corbels representing the progeny of hell. In some of the wall-paintings, as, for instance, the great piece at the west end of the church of Chaldon, in Surrey, there is a remarkable resemblance to the huge, muscular, talon-footed demons of the line-drawings in eleventh-century books. There is no need to remind the reader of the fearful interest taken by the mediæval priest, and doubtless by his flock, in this side of religious teaching. The force of many tales in the *Alphabetum Narrationum* and other clerical miscellanies lay in the appalling realism with which the mind of the church-going public was habituated to the painted shapes of malicious fiends and of the ghastly torments awaiting the sinner after death. The *Gospel of*

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Nicodemus had a singular vogue in this country, and was a fertile source of subjects to the mediæval artist.

Thus, as ecclesiastical art widened its scope, a wide range of subjects was opened up. From single figures of divine personages and prophets, patriarchs, apostles, saints, and kings the artist went on to dramatic groups, annunciations, nativities, transfigurations, passions, entombments, ascensions, miracles, martyrdoms, and then to pictured stories, such as the massacre of the innocents, the tale of Adam and Eve, of Noah, Samson, David, Jonah, Dives and Lazarus, and the like. Most of the saints and martyrs in the calendar appeared in statue and stained glass, on wall and chancel arch, in illuminated psalter and missal, and no doubt in the tapestries, though, to judge from accounts of lost examples, history or profane romance was a more popular subject of this last-named art,[1] which did not reach its best till long after our period. The histories of local saints were delineated with much elaboration. That of St Alban at his eponymous church, of St Edmund at Wells, St Etheldreda at Ely, and St Thomas at Canterbury are limned in dramatic episodes in the windows and the sculpture. But the cosmopolitan saints appear almost everywhere. The romantic stories of St Margaret, Katherine of Alexandria, and St Christopher made them special favourites, and they were always represented with the traditional tokens of their deeds and adventures—St Katherine with her wheel, Christopher fording the river, palm-tree staff in hand, St Margaret with the dragon that swallowed her and then burst asunder. These pictorial narratives had the same object as the stories told in the course of a homily—to edify, to warn, to instruct in sacred history or religious dogma ; and the didactic purpose was commonly enforced by a rude symbolism akin to the allegorical element in literature. Thus in portrayals of the Annunciation it was usual to set a lily growing in a wine-jar between the figures of the Virgin and the angel Gabriel,[2] as a visual epitome of the miracle related in Christian story-books, how a lily sprang up in a wine-pot as a simile of the birth of Christ from the virgin body of Mary, confounding a heathenish Jew who had refused to believe. The representations of antitypes, and particularly the psychomachia of virtues and vices

[1] See *e.g.* Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Book III., canto xi., stanzas 28-46.
[2] Frank Kendon, *Mural Paintings in English Churches*, 1923, p. 42.

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common in French churches and occurring in the Painted Chamber at Westminster, are obvious examples of the taste for allegory. But the practical English temperament was not in love with abstractions, and these symbolical personages were painted as typical men and women performing characteristic deeds, relieving the poor, feeding the hungry, comforting the sick and sorrowful, or the reverse. The vices appear caught in the very act of crime and cruelty, with all the expressiveness of their lust for evil.[1] Ivory triptychs show the same characteristics in a more delicate medium and on a miniature scale.

The idealism of the finest religious figures extended to coeval effigies of ecclesiastics, monarchs, crusading barons, and other distinguished personages laid to rest in the churches. The early sepulchral figures are, like the heroes of contemporary literature, types rather than individuals; there is no attempt to characterise them by marks of personal expression. It is not till the declining age of Gothic art that faithful portraiture becomes the rule, with exact reproduction of every trait and a repudiation of that idealism which had ennobled even the ruder products of the former age. But as in the literature of the time realism, or at any rate verisimilitude, had its beginnings in the stories that dealt with common everyday life, so was it too in the illustrative arts. The *fabliau* motives noticed in some of the sculptures at Wells were by no means rare. Elsewhere bits of folk-lore, fables of Reynard and other beasts, anecdotes of farm life, vignettes of domestic scenes are not uncommon, many of them standing in as much need of interpretation as did the stories told in the pulpit. If these were largely parables and allegories, so were the pictures and the reliefs; all had the same didactic aim, now ethical and now doctrinal.

Little has been preserved of the domestic glass of the Middle Ages, but we can form some notion of its character from Chaucer's description in the *Book of the Duchess*[2]:

> And, sooth to seyn, my chambre was
> Ful wel depeynted, and with glas
> Were al the windowes wel y-glased,
> Ful clere, and nat an hole y-crased,

[1] Frank Kendon, *Mural Paintings in English Churches*, passim.
[2] iii. 321-334.

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That to beholde hit was gret joye.
For hooly al the storie of Troye
Was in the glasing y-wroght thus,
Of Ector and king Priamus,
Of Achilles and Lamedon,
Of Medea and of Jason,
Of Paris, Eleyne, and Lavyne.
And alle the walles with colours fyne
Were peynted, bothe text and glose,
Of al the Romaunce of the Rose.

It is perhaps significant that, in this country, the highly popular Arthurian romances, including the devotional story of the Grail, does not appear to have yielded the ecclesiastical artist any subjects. This certainly lends colour to the theory that the Church looked askance even at stories that professed to deal with the origin and inner meaning of the most sacred mysteries, if there were any doubt of their credentials.

Late Gothic art

With the approach of the fifteenth century there is a decline of spirituality in all the arts. The artists, whatever their particular craft, are more expert than ever ; they parade their technique in a prodigality of subjects ; there is no limit to their realism, their accurate drawing from the life ; but the religious feeling is supplanted by the passion for constructive feats, efficient craftsmanship, and gorgeous elaboration. The figure-work in the churches is no longer an integral part of the building, but obviously put there for show. The statues have lost their monumental character, although they have gained in a suggestion of life and movement which was beyond the canons of a more restrained art. The love of fantastic display, which was a leading foible of the latter days of chivalry, and which is reflected in the extravagant sequels and exaggerated versions foisted on to the established stories, as well as in the later and more far-fetched varieties of chivalric romance, in which tradition was abandoned for fanciful invention, appears in the heraldic glass and the carved images which are spread with a lavish hand throughout the decorations of buildings. Griffins, popinjays, dragons, heraldic lions, serpents, and every kind of fabulous beast occupy the coigns of vantage. Niches for sculpture are hollowed out even in the pendents dropping from the fan

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tracery. The elaborate screens of these days offer further opportunities for figure-work. The great hammer-beam roofs carry regiments of angels on the principals and cornice. The walls were reduced to piers and the windows enlarged to enormous screens of glass to give space for the Biblical stories, the lives of saints, the choirs of angels, and the views of streets and cities, which, on the eve of the Renaissance, anticipated in some degree the crowded spectacles, realistic landscapes, and views in perspective of a later day. The actual mingling of mediæval and modern, sacred and profane, characteristic of the last age of Gothic art, is fully displayed in the arrogant profusion of ornament in the chapel of King's College, Cambridge.

The art of the illuminator was nearing its decline. It had attained its utmost magnificence during the fourteenth century, and one example, specially interesting for its illustration of life and literature, is in a style which already shows evidences of decay. This is the famous *Louterell Psalter*, executed about 1340. The margins of this volume are adorned with scenes from contemporary life, domestic pictures, including figures of the Louterell family at their daily affairs, incidents from allegorical and other romances, from legends and *fabliaux*, all full of vigour and charming as glimpses of actuality and of the things that interested actual people, though not remarkable for beauty or finish. This was the general character of the illuminated books until the end of the century, when a revival, due probably to foreign inspiration, was responsible for some magnificent Bibles, missals and books of hours. But the native inspiration seems to have perished, and the finer work of the fifteenth century is due to French and Flemish artists or to those who copied them.

A great event was impending, the Renaissance, which was to change the history of all the arts, among them the art of fiction. Some were to be submerged and extinguished by foreign influences. But, unlike those, English fiction was to rise again revivified, to show the world centuries later its native strength by setting examples to all competitors.

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INDEX

ACHILLES TATIUS, 42-43, 48, 235
Acts, 53
Acts of the Apostles. See Apocryphal *Acts*
Acusilaus, 25
Adenet le Roi, *Enfances Ogier*, 214; extracts, 214-216
Adonis, 158-159
Ælfric, *Lives of the Saints*, 44, 53-56, 260, 318; extracts, 54-55
Æsop's fables, 260, 264, 265, 287
Æthiopica, 42
Agatha, St, 55
Agnes, St, 55
Alban, St, 313
Albéric de Besançon, 32, 33
Alberich (Oberon), 211, 221
Alexander, prose, 235
Alexander and Dindimus, 31
Alexander legend, 29-33, 60, 234-235
Alexander's *Iter ad Paradisum*, 32; letters to Aristotle, 31, 60, 281
Alexandreis, 281
Alexandrine, the, 212, 216, 218
Alfour, King of Sicily, 246
Alfred, King, translation of Æsop, 260
Aliscans, 212
Allegory, 253, 256, 260, 263, 264, 265-273
Alphabet of Tales (*Alphabetum Narrationum*), 270-273, 312, 322; extracts, 271-273
"Alysaunder the Orphelyn," 194; extract, 205-207
Amadis, 250, 257
Amadis de Gaula, 250-253, 254, 255
Ambrosius. See Merlin
Ambrosius Aurelianus, 64, 75. See also Merlin
Amis et Amile, 286
Amour courtois. See Courtly love
Ancren Riwle, 274-275
Andreas, 52-53
Androcles, legend of, 125, 264
Anglian crosses, 306
Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, 66-67
Anglo-Saxon period, 306-308
Anguis or Anguish, King, 104*n*.
Annales Cambriæ, 66, 95, 318
Annunciation, 313
Anonymity of mediæval romances, 305
Antonius Diogenes, 37-38, 41
Apocalypse, 45, 53, 311, 312
Apocrypha, 49, 53
Apocryphal *Acts*, 45-46; *Gospels*, 44, 53
Apollonius of Tyana, 27, 34
Apollonius of Tyre, 43, 56-60, 318
Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, 38, 40-41
Arawn, King of Annwvyn, 88
Architecture, comparison with fiction. See Art
Aristotle, Alexander's letters to, 31, 60, 281
Armorican theory. See Continental theory
Arnold, Matthew, on Celtic literature, 88
Arras, Jean d', *Melusyne*, 239, 241; 322; extracts, 239-241
Art, historical comparison with fiction, 306-316
Arthur, birth of, 150, 253; not mentioned in Gildas, 64; mentioned by Nennius, 65-66; in *Annales Cambriæ*, 66-67; Welsh national hero, 67; in Black Book of Carmarthen, 67; in William of Malmesbury, 67; *dux militum et regum Britanniæ*, in Geoffrey of Monmouth, 68; as Celtic Zeus or sun-god, 73; in *Livre d'Artus*, 149; outshone by Gawain, 153; in Thornton *Morte Arthure*, 172-173; at Carlisle, 186
Arthur's battle with giant of St Michael's Mount, 71, 75, 175; burial-place, 149; death, 151, 178, 179; war against Lucius, 173; vision of the bear and the dragon, 200-204
Arthurian cycle. See Vulgate cycle
Artus de la Bretagne, 257
Aryan mythology, nature worship, 159
Asceticism, Galahad as type of, 151
Asseneth, 163

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Assonance in *chansons de geste*, 212
Atlantis, 36, 38
Attis, 158, 161
Aubert, David, *The Three Kings' Sons*, 246, 322
Aucassin et Nicolete, 223*n.*, 286
Avalon, 71, 76, 120
Awdeley, John, 293, 296
Aymon, 218

Bacon, Francis, on Poesy, 13
Badon, Mount. See Mount Badon
Baker, E. A., *Guide to the Best Fiction in English*, 317
Balan, 217
Baranton, fountain of, 79, 126
Barbour, John, *Lives of the Saints*, 274
Bayard, Renaud's horse, 218
Bear and the dragon, Arthur's vision of, 200-204
Beaujeu, Renaud de, *Le Bel Inconnu*, 135-138, 193; extracts, 137,145-147, 320
Beaumayns, 151, 192
Beauvais, Vincent de, *Speculum Doctrinale*, 261; *Speculum Historiale*, 217, 280; *Speculum Naturale*, 280
Bebel, Heinrich, *Facetiæ*, 288, 292
Bede, 56, 66-67
Bédier, Joseph, 124, 208, 209, 210, 211, 218*n*; *Les Légendes Épiques*, 317
Bedivere or Bedwyr, 67, 74, 91
Beggar-books, 296. See also Awdeley, John, and Harman, Thomas
Beltenebros, 253
Beowulf, 51, 61
Bercheur, Pierre. See Berchorius, Petrus.
Berchorius, Petrus, *Reductorium super totam Bibliam*, 261; *Repertorium Morale*, 261; *Dictionarium Morale*, 261
Berners, Lord, *Huon of Bordeaux*, 219-224, 322; extracts, 224-228; euphuism, 223, 224*n.*; *Golden Book of Marcus Aurelius*, 255; *Castle of Love*, 255-257; *Arthur of Little Britain*, 255-258, 322
Berners' prologue to *Arthur of Little Britain*, 303
Béroul, *Tristan*, 83-85, 100-107, 320
Besançon. See Albéric de Besançon
Besançon. See Étienne de Besançon
Besant, Sir Walter, 14
Bewcastle cross, 306
Bible stories compiled by Berchorius, 261
Bidpai, Fables of, 264
Biographical romance, 126
Björkman, Erik, 321
Black Book of Carmarthen, 67
Black Castle, or Castle of the Black Hermit, 123
Bladud, 74
Blancandin et l'Orgueilleuse d'Amour, 218
Bledhericus. See Bléri
Bleeding spear, 156. See also Longinus
Bleheris. See Bléri
Bléri (Bréri, Blihis, Bledhericus), 84, 104, 152, 157-158, 161
Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 235, 262, 271, 288, 291; borrows from *Gesta Romanorum*, 263
Bodel, Jean, *Chanson de Saisnes*, 63*n.*, 208
Boldensele, William of, 280
Book of Kells, 307
Borodine, Myrrha, 111*n.*; *La Femme et l'Amour au XIIme siècle*, 321
Borron, Hélie de, *Tristan*, 148
Borron, Robert de, 128; *Joseph d'Arimathie*, 148-151, 162-163; *Merlin*, 75-76, 148-151, 153, 163; "Didot" *Percival*, 148, 150; uses Grail story for eucharistic teaching, 154, 161
Bouillon, Godfrey de, 247, 280
Bouillon. See also Clarisse, Duchess of
Bourbon. See Étienne de Bourbon
Bourchier, Sir John. See Lord Berners
Bragmans, the, 282
Brahmins, 31, 32, 263-265
Bran, voyage of, 100, 156
"Branwen," 155
Bréri. See Bléri
Breton lays, 83, 85, 124
Broceliande, 78, 124, 190, 220, 249
Bromyard, John, *Summa Predicantium*, 261
Bron or Brons. See Bran
Brooke, Henry, "The Three Silver Trouts," 264-265
Brown, A. C. L., on the Round Table, 78*n.*
Bruce, J. D., *Evolution of Arthurian Romance*, 319
Brut, 69, 78, 79; version later than Wace, 150
Brut Tysilio, 69
Brutus of Troy, 68-69, 70, 72

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Buddhist stories, 263
Bunyan, John, perhaps borrows from Mandeville, 282-283
Byrhtnoth, death of, 61
Byzantine influence in art, 307; in mediæval romance, 235

C. Mery Talys. See *Hundred Mery Talys*
Cadwallader, 68, 71
Caedmonian poems, 49, 51, 61-62
Calahorra, Diego Ortuñez de. See Ortuñez
Callisthenes, 29
Cambridge, King's College Chapel, 316
Cambridge History of English Literature, 318
Camlan, battle of, 66, 95
Capua. See John of Capua
Caradoc of Llancarvan, *Vita Gildæ*, 76
Carolingian epics, 211, 216-228 *passim*; renaissance, 307
Carte de Tendre, 117
Castle of Case, 123
Castle of Love, 256
Castle of the Grail, 123, 247, 249
Castle of the Lame King, 129
Castle of the Sparrowhawk, 283
Cauldron of Renovation, 155
Cauldron of the Head of Hades, 155
Cauldron of the steward of the King of Ireland, 155
Cauldrons of plenty, 220
Caxton, William, 81, 191; translations, 216, 217, 218, 219, 229, 262; *Charles the Grete*, 216-217, 322; *Foure Sonnes of Aymon*, 218, 322; *Blanchardyn and Eglantyne*, 218-219, 322; *Paris and Vienne*, 219, 322; *History of Jason*, 229-230, 322; extract, 230-233, 233-234; *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, 229, 322; *Book of the Knight of the Tower*, 245; *Golden Legend*, 274, 280; *Historye of Reynart the Foxe*, 287
Caxton's preface to Malory, 302-303, 304
Celtic folk-lore origin of Grail, 155-157, 160, 217; motives in art, 307-309; mysticism, 112; romance in *Yvain*, 124
Cent Nouvelles nouvelles, Les, 235, 286, 288
Cento Novelle Antiche, 235, 288
Ceriton, Odo de, fables, 261, 287
Cervantes, Miguel de, 250-251
Chaldon wall-paintings, 312
Chambers, Prof. R. W., 5, 69*n*, 77*n*.
Chansons de geste, 208-228; origin, 210
Chap-books, 263, 292
Chapelin, André de, 109
Chapelizod, 104*n*.
Character and motive in Malory's *Morte Darthur*, 193
Character-writers, 297
Characterisation in Chrétien's work, 134
Chariton of Aphrodisias, 42-43
Charlemagne cycle, 208, 210, 211-228 *passim*
Charles the Grete, 23, 216-217
Chassang, C., on Greek romances, 25; on *Apollonius of Tyana*, 25; on Alexander legend, 29; on Lucian, 37; on early Christian literature, 45; *Histoire du Roman dans l'Antiquité*, 317
Châtillon. See Gautier de Châtillon
Chaucer, Geoffrey, 287; *Sir Thopas*, 100; "Franklin's Tale," 100*n*.; *Troilus and Cressida*, 193, 230, 295, 301; *Melibee*, 296; borrows from *Gesta Romanorum*, 263; "Wife of Bath's Tale," 270; *Canterbury Tales*, 286; *Legend of Good Women*, 286; "Nun Priest's Tale," 287; *Book of the Duchess*, 314-315
Chestre, Thomas, *Sir Launfal*, 100
Chevalere Assigne (*Chevalier au Cygne*), 249
Chevalier de la Charrette, Le. See Chrétien de Troyes
Chèvrefeuille, Le, 98
Child of the Sea, the, 253
Chrétien de Troyes, 84-86, 96, 108-147, 229, 301; *Tristan and Iseult*, 101, 109; *Guillaume d'Angleterre*, 109; *Cligès*, 109, 111, 117-119, 235; *Érec*, 109, 111, 112-117, 135; extracts, 142; *Chevalier de la Charrette*, 111, 118-121; *Yvain*, 111, 124-127, 150; extracts, 143; *Perceval le Gallois*, 123, 128, 150, 152-153, 157, 160; extracts, 132-133, 143-145, 320; and his school, 105; *Sämtliche Werke*, 320.
Christian *Apocrypha*, 43-49
Christianisation of Grail symbols, 160-163; of Merlin legend, 149
Christopher, St, 313
Chronicle of St Michael's Mount, 67

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Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri

Cicero, *De Oratore*, 270; *Dream of Cicero*, 38
Cid, the, 250
Clarisse, Duchess of Bouillon, 248-249
Clarisse et Florent, La Chanson de, 223
Classical influences in mediæval romance, 25-34, 235
"Claudius Hollyband." See Desainliens, Claude
Clemens Romanus, 48
Clementine homilies and recognitions 48-49
Chrétien de Troyes. See Chrétien de Troyes
Chrysostom. See Dion Chrysostom
Clitophon and Leucippe, 43
Cobler of Canterbury, The, 293
Coleridge, S. T., 17, 299, 300
Cologne, 218
Colonne, Guido delle, 229
Comic tales, 286-293
Communal origins, 304-305
Conchobar, 73, 153
Coney-catching stories, 296
Continental theory, 84, 108
Copland, William, 60, 246, 248, 287, 292
Courthope, W. J., 235; *History of English Poetry*, 317
Courtly love, 109, 111, 117, 119-121, 130, 193, 252, 256
Coverley papers, 297
Crist, 53
Croce, Benedetto, on poetry in prose, 19
Croissant, Le Roman de, 223
Crónica del Cid, 250
Crónica General de España, 250
Cross, W. L., *The Development of the English Novel*, 317
Crusades, poem by Jean d'Outremeuse on the, 280. See also Holy Land
Cuchullin, 153
Cups, magic, 220
Cuthbert Roll, 308
Cuthbert, St, 56
Cynewulf, 49, 278, 307 school of, 49, 52-53, 61, 62
Cyropædia. See Xenophon

Dame Siris, 286
Daphnis and Chloe, 41-42
Dares Phrygius, 27-28 229
David, St, 74
Decameron. See Boccaccio
De la Fayette, Mme, 111
De Montmorency, J. E. G., "Who was King Arthur?" 65*n*.
Defoe, Daniel, 19, 24, 284, 298, 299
Dekker, Thomas, *Bachelor's Banquet*, 286
Deloney, Thomas, *Jack of Newburie*, 271, 293
Deor's Complaint, 51
Desainliens, Claude, 256*n*.
Dialogue, 214
Dictys Cretensis, 27-28, 229
Didactic element, 62, 260, 300
"Didot" *Perceval*, 148
Dinias and Dercyllis, 37-38, 41
Diodorus Siculus, 26, 29
Dion Chrysostom, 34, 44
Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 26
Don Beliants de Grecia, 255
Don Juan as a novel, 16, 18
Donatus, 35
Dream of Rhonabwy, 73, 90, 94-95
Dream of the Holy Rood, 307
Drystan. See Tristan
Dubricius, St, 74
Duchesne, L., *Nennius Retractatus*, 65*n*.
Dunlop John, *History of Fiction*, 257, 317
Dymphna, St, 56

Early English Prose Romances, 323
Edda, 306
Elaine, the maid of Astolat, 179
Elberich. See Alberich
Eleanor of Aquitaine, 109, 122
Elene, 53
Elizabethan novels, 296
Elphin, son of Gwyddno, 95
Elsa, Duchess of Brabant, 246-247
Elynas and Pressyne, 239-241, 242-243
Emare, 135
Empereur Constant, L', 286
English Arthurian romance, 171-197
Enid. See Geraint
Ephesiaca, 41
Epical spirit of *chansons de geste*, 208, 212
Erec et Enide, 96, 163; extracts, 114, 138-141
Erotic romances, 39-43, 297
Eschenbach, Wolfram von, 153, 158, 160; *Parzival*, 247
Esclaramonde. See Huon
Esclaramonde, La Chanson d', 223
Esdaile, Arundell, *A List of English Tales and Prose Romances*, 317
Esplandian, 250

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Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri

Essarts, Nicholas de Herberay, seigneur des. See Herberay
Essylt or Esyllt. See Iseult
Étienne de Besançon. *Alphabetum Narrationum*, 270-273, 290
Étienne de Bourbon, *Liber de Septem Donis*, 261
Eucharist, 154
Eucharistic theory of Grail. See also Transubstantiation, Lance, Longinus
Eudoxus of Cyzicus, 36
Eugenia, St, 54
Euhemerus, 26, 38, 39
Euphuism, 223-224
Eustace of Kent, 33
Eustatius Makrembolites, 42
Evans, Sebastian, *High History of the Holy Grail*, extracts, 133-134, 320*n*.
Eventus. See Yvain
Excalibur, 153, 179, 187
Experimental fiction, 16-17

FABLES, 260-265, 287
Fabliaux, 235, 265, 281, 286-287, 288, 290, 293-294
Fabulous anthropology, 281
Fairford windows, 312
Fates of the Apostles, 53
Feast of Bricriu, 80
Ferragus, 217, 246
Fertility symbolism, 158-160
Fescamp (Fécamp), Abbey of, 162
Fiction, includes narrative poetry, drama, etc., 12; differentiation of prose fiction, 12-13; how it originates, 23. See also Novel
Fielding, Henry, 297, 299, 300
Fierabras, chanson de geste, 217
Fierabras, prose, 217
Finnsburh saga, 51, 61
Fisher, Lizette A., *The Mystic Vision in the Grail Legend*, 321
Fisher King, 129, 159
Fitzmaurice-Kelly, J., on Spanish romances, 250-251; on the *Amadis* 251; on *Palmerin*, 254
Fletcher, R. H., *The Arthurian Material in the Chronicles*, 321
Florence of Argenton, 257
Förster, W., on Arthurian origins, 85, 320
Foulques Fitz Warin, 286, 322
Four Sons of Aymon, 218
Fox and the Wolf, The, 287
Freiberg, Heinrich von, version of *Tristan*, 107
French romanticism, 121, 255
Friar Rush, 292
Fulk Fitz Warine, 235-236, 286, 299, 322; extracts, 237-238

GAELIC legends, 87
Gaimar, Geoffrey, *Estoric des Engles*, 78, 319; lost chronicle of, 79
Galahad, 129, 162-163, 164, 166, 193, 198-200; supplants Perceval as hero of the quest, 151
Galahalt of Surluse, Great Tournament of, 194; extract, 207
Galaor, 252-253
Galien, 216
Ganelon, 217
Gareth, 130-131
Garin de Monglane, 216
Gast, Luces de, *Tristan*, 148
Gaultier de Châtillon, *Alexandreis*, 32, 33, 281
Gautier d'Arras, *Ille et Galeron*, 109; *Éracle*, 110
Gawain, 73, 119-121, 128, 150, 152-153, 157, 163, 178, 192
Gawain as sun-god, 153
Gentle Craft, The, 293
Geoffrey of Monmouth, 301; *Historia Regum Britanniæ*, 68-77, 82, 83, 90, 121, 124, 173, 319; extract, 201-202; *Brut*, 69; *Vita Merlini*, 75, 319; *Prophecies of Merlin*, 70*n*., 194; editions, 77*n*.
George à Green, 292
Geraint, 67, 96, 112, 116
"Geraint the Son of Erbin," 96
Gerames, 221
Gereint, 67
Gesta Romanorum, 164, 261-262, 265, 266, 270, 323; English version, 60, 262-263, 266-269; Utrecht edition, 262; Cologne or vulgate edition, 262; sources, 263
Geste of King Horn, 244
Giant of St Michael's Mount, 71, 75, 175
Gibbon on virgin martyrs, 48
Giglain, son of Gawain, 135-138
Gildas, *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniæ*, 63-64, 67, 319; *Vita Gildæ*, 319
Giraldus Cambrensis, 84, 152
Girard de Rousillon, 209
Girardin, Saint-Marc, on *Huon of Bordeaux*, 221
Glass-painting, 310-316
Glastonbury, 76-77, 149, 162, 178. See also Avalon

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Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri

Gloucester, Earl of. See Robert, Earl of Gloucester
Godfrey de Bouillon, 247, 280
Godfrey of Viterbo. See Viterbo
Gog and Magog, 30, 281
Golden Fleece, Order of the, 230
Gormund, Gormundus, Gurmon, 104, 123
Gorneman or Gurnemanz, 123
Gosforth cross, 306
Gospel of Nicodemus. See Nicodemus
Gospels. See Apocryphal Gospels
Gothic art, 309-316
Gottfried von Strassburg. See Strassburg
Gower, John, *Confessio Amantis*, 60; borrows from *Gesta Romanorum*, 263
"Graelent," 100
Grail Castle, 123, 247, 249
Grail legend, 77, 111, 124, 128-138, 149, 151-152, 191, 220, 246; amalgamated with matter of Britain, 148; Christianisation of, 152, 154, 160-163; explanations of, 153-164; folk-lore origin, 154-157, 160; ritual theory, 154-155, 157-158; not recognised by Church, 315
Grand Conte, 152, 161
Grand Saint Graal or *Estoire del Saint Graal*, 151, 163, 183, 187; extract, 183-186, 204-205; in vulgate versions, 320
Grattan, J. A. H., 61*n*.
Greek influences in art, 306-307
Greek legends used by Cynewulf, 52
Greek prose fiction, 23, 24; historical sketch of, 25-43
Greek romances, 297
Gringamore of Avalon, 100. See also Guingamor
Griselda legend, 246
Grosseteste's *Château d'Amour*, 256*n*.
Grotesques in art, 312, 315
Gruffyd, W. J., 87*n*.
Gualter of Oxford, Archdeacon, 69
Guanhumara. See Guenevere
Guenevere, 71, 76, 80, 118-121, 150, 191-192; burial-place of, 149
Guest, Lady Charlotte. See *Mabinogion*
Guevara, 296
Guillaume d'Angleterre, 109
Guingamor, 99-100, 125
Gurmon. See Gormundus
Guthlac poem, 53
HADLEY, William, on Alexander legend, 33*n*.
Hagiography. See Saints' lives
Hali Meidenhad, 274-275
Harman, Thomas, 293, 296
Harrowing of Hell, 53
Hazlitt, W. C., 262-263; ed. *A C. Mery Talys*, 322
Hecatæus of Abdera, 39
Helias. See Helyas
Heliodorus, 41-42, 48
Hellanicus, 25
Helyas the Swan Knight, 246-249
Henderson, W. A., *The Discovery of Isolde's Chapel*, 104*n*.; *The Identification of Sir Percival*, 123*n*.
Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, 68
Herberay, Nicholas de, seigneur des Essarts, 251
Hermas' *The Shepherd*, 45
Herodotus, 28
Heroicus. See Philostratus the Lemnian
Heroine, the, 53; introduced from Greek romance, 41
Hesiod, 25
Heywood, John, 288
High History of the Holy Grail, The. See *Perlesvaus*
Hildesheim. See John of Hildesheim
Historia Britonum. See Nennius
Historia Regum Britanniæ. See Geoffrey of Monmouth
Hiwenus. See Yvain
Hodgkin, Dr, on *Brut Tysilio*, 69*n*.
Holkot, Robert, *Moralitates*, 261, 262
Holy Land, legends of, 235, 279
Homer, lives of, 35
Homeric poems as basis for prose romance, 25
Honeysuckle, The, 98
Honour of Chivalrie, The, 255
Horn, Geste of King, 244
Horn and Rimenhild, 104*n*., 244, 245
Howleglass, 288, 292
Huchown of the Awle Ryale, 172-173
Humour, first appearance in literature, 86; origin of English, 133, 286-294; in *Mandeville's Travels*, 281
Hundred Mery Talys, A, 288-292, 322; extracts, 289-292
Huon of Bordeaux, 211, 219, 322; extracts, 224-228
Hypatia, 277
Hysminias and Hysmine, 43

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Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri

IAMBLICHUS, author of *Babylonica*, 41
Iamblichus the Neoplatonist, 34
Iambulus, 39
Ide et Olive, La Chanson d', 223
Idealism in literature and in plastic arts, 310; in sculpture, 314
Ider, 73
Incest motive, 56
Incredible Things beyond Thule, 36, 37-38, 41
Indian folk-tales, 263-265
Insular theory of Arthurian sources, 84, 96-97, 108
Invention in mediæval romance, 300-304
Ipomydon, Life of, 245
Irish mythological cycle, 86-87
Irish romantic sagas, 93-94
Iseult, 103. See also Tristan
Iseult of the White Hands, 102, 106
Italian *novellieri*, 297

Jack of Dover, 293
Jason and Medea, 230-234
Jataka tales, 263-265, 323
Jean d'Outremeuse. See Outremeuse
Jest-books, 288, 292-293
Joel, Rabbi, 264
John of Capua, *Directorium Humanæ Vitæ*, 264
John of Hildesheim, *Historia Trium Regum*, 244
Jones, W. Lewis, 67*n*.
Jónson, Brandr, 32
Joseph of Arimathea, 44, 45, 154, 162
Joseph of Arimathea, or the Romance of the Saint Graal, 183-186; extract, 183-185
Judith, 49, 51, 61, 278
Juliana, St, 53, 278, 323

KAI. See Kay
Kalilah and Dimnah, 264
Katherine, St, 275-278, 281, 313, 323; extract from *Life*, 277-278
Kay, 67, 73-75, 91
Kei. See Kay
Ker, W. P., *Epic and Romance*, 317
Kilhwych and Olwen, 73, 75, 87, 90-94, 96, 155
Kiot, 158
Knight of the Green Sword, 253
Knight of the Lion, 253
Knight of the Swanne, The, extract, 247-248

LA CALPRENÈDE, 117
La Coudrette, 241
La Fayette, Mme de, 111
La Noue, 252
La Sale, Antoine de, *Petit Jehane de Saintré*, 286; *Les Quinze Joies de Mariage*, 286; *Les Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, 286
La Sierra, Pedro de, 255
La Sippade, Pierre de, 219
La Tour-Landry, *Book of the Knight of the Tower*, 244-245, 262, 323; *Pontus et Sidoine*, 245
Lady Castle, in Ireland, 123
Lady of Esclair, 123
Lady of the Fountain, 96, 124, 193
Lais bretons, 83, 85
Lame King. See Fisher King
Lance and Cup, 159
Lance and Salver, 154, 157. See also Longinus
Lancelot, 76, 118-121, 150-151, 152, 162-163, 164, 166, 182, 186, 191, 192, 198-200
Lancelot and Guenevere, 191, 193-194; story first appears in Arthurian literature, 121
Lancelot of the Laik, 186-187
Land of Cockaigne, 286
Langtoft, Peter, metrical chronicle, 81
Lanval, tale of, 99, 100
Latin prose chronicles, 81
Layamon, *Brut*, 79-80, 82, 83, 121; extract, 202-204, 320
Le Fèvre, Raoul, 229-230; *Recueil des Histoires de Troie*, 230
Lear, 74, 263
Lee, Sir Sidney, 223
Leeu, Gerard, 287
Legend, its growth, 302
Leland, John, 236
Leo the Archpresbyter, *Historia de Prœliis*, 31, 33
Libeaus Desconus, 135, 145-147
Life of Saint Katherine, 323; extract, 277-278
Liflade of St Juliana, The, 323; extract, 278
Lincoln sculpture, 310
Lindisfarne Gospels, 307
Lisuarte, King of Great Britain, 253
Lives of Women Saints, 318
Livre d'Artus, 149-151
"Llud and Llevelys," 90

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Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri

Loberia, Joham de, 250
Lobeira, Vasco de, 250
Logres, 120, 250
Lohengrin (Loherangrin), 246-247, 249
Longinus, 45, 154, 159
Longus, 41-42
Loth, M., 90*n.*, 95*n.*, 96*n.*
Louterell Psalter, 316
Lovelich, Herry, translation of *Grand Saint Graal* and *Merlin*, 187-188, 190
Lucian, 36, 37, 39, 41
Lucius, procurator of Rome, 71
Ludlow Castle, 236-238
Lusignan, Raimondin de, 239, 241
Lydgate, John, *Troy Book*, 229; *Siege of Thebes*, 229; borrows from *Gesta Romanorum*, 263
Lyly's *Euphues*, 223-224, 296
Lynette. See Gareth

Mabinogion, 73, 85-97, 115-116, 124, 126, 129-131, 155; extracts, 88, 115-116, 129, 131, 320
Mabinogion, Les, 320
Mac Datho's pig, Irish story of, 80
Maeterlinck, M., *Pelléas et Mélisande*, 241
Mahabharata, 159
Maldon, fight at, 61
Malmesbury Abbey, 309
Malmesbury, William of. See William
Malory, Sir Thomas, 82-83, 123, 304
Malory's *Morte Darthur*, 81, 135, 151, 172, 178, 179, 190-194, 295, 321; advance towards future novel, 193; extracts, 164-165, 166-171, 173-174, 175, 176-177, 182-183, 194-195, 196-197
Malory's version of *Tristan*, 102, 107; version of Lancelot story, 119-120, 121; authorities, 151; style, 163; unification of cyclic stories of Arthur, 191
Manawyddan, Mabinogi of, 156
"Manawyddan the Son of Llyr," 89
Mandeville, Sir John, *Travels*. See Outremeuse, Jean d'
Manessier, contribution to Chrétien's *Perceval le Gallois*, 128
Mannynge, Robert, 81
Mantrible, Bridge of, 217
Map, Walter, 121*n.*, 150. See also Gualter of Oxford.
March. See Mark, king of Cornwall
Margaret, St, 275-276, 313; *Life*, 323
Marie, Countess, daughter of Louis VII., 109, 119, 121
Marie de France, *Lais*, 83-85, 97-98, 320; *Ysopet*, 260
Mark, king of Cornwall, 95, 103
Marshall, William, Earl of Pembroke, allusions (?) in Chrétien, 122-123
Martel, Charles, 211, 218
Martiñez, Marcos, 255
Mary Magdalene, relics, 109-110
"Matter of Britain," 68, 148
"Matter of France," 208-228
"Matter of Troy," 229
Maugis, 218
Maynadier, G. H., *The Arthur of the English Poets*, 321
Medea. See Jason
Méléagant (Mellyagraunce), 76, 119, 120, 121
Melusyne, 239-244, 283, 322
Melvas, Melwas. See Méléagant
Meredith, G., *Shaving of Shagpat*, 93*n.*
Merlin, 65, 70-76, 79, 80, 189, 192; tomb of, 79; Christianisation, 149
Merlin, 187-190, 321; extracts, 187-188, 189-190
Merlin, vulgate version of Borron's, 148-151, 191
Merlin Silvestris or Celidonius, 75*n.*
Merrie Conceited Jests of George Peele, The, 293, 322
Mery Tales and Quicke Answeres, 292, 322
Milesian tales, 40-41, 47
Miller of Abingdon, 286
Mirk, John, *Liber Festivalis*, 260, 274, 323
Mirrour of Princely Deedes and Knighthood, 254
Mithraism, 160-161
Modred, 66, 71, 76, 80, 121, 178, 192
Molière, *Georges Dandin*, 271
Montalvo, Garcia Ordoñez de. See Ordoñez.
Montreuil, Gerbert de, contribution to Chrétien's *Perceval le Gallois*, 128
Moore, J. H., *The Historical Basis of Tristan and Iseult*, 94*n.*, 104*n.*
Moraes, Francisco de, *Palmerin de Inglaterra*, 254
Moralisation, 265-273, 291
Mordred. See Modred
More, Sir Thomas, 288
Morgan le Fay, 205-207

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Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri

Morolt, 101
Morris, William, 229-230, 302
Mort Artus, 150-151, 178, 190
Morte Arthur, stanzaic poem, 179-183, 321; extract, 179-183
Morte Arthure. See Thornton *Morte Arthure*
Morte Darthur. See Malory, Sir Thomas
Mount Badon, battle of, 65, 66, 71, 95
Münchhausen, Baron, 60
Munday, Anthony, *Amadis of Gaule*, 251; *Palmerin d'Oliva*, 254; *Palmendos*, 254; *Palmerin of England*, 254; *Palladine of England*, 254*n*.
Mystical element in Arthurian literature, 129-130, 155, 161

NASH, Thomas, *Jack Wilton*, 293
Naturalism. See Realism
Nature-worship, 152-153, 158-160
Naymes, Duke, 221
Neilson, Dr, 173
Nennius, *Historia Britonum*, 64-66, 319; *Mirabilia Britonum*, 66, 67, 90; *Brut*, 69
Newburgh. See William of Newburgh
Nibelungenlied, 211
Nicodemus, Gospel of, 44, 53, 162, 312-313
Nitze, W. A., 158*n*.
Norman art, 308-309
Norse influence in art. See Scandinavian
North, Thomas, *The Morall Philosophie of Doni*, 264
Nouvelles, 235
Novel, general theory, see Introductory chapter, 11-23; evolution of the form, 11-13, 295-299; definitions, 13-16; an interpretation of life, 14-15; something between art and science, 15-16; why in prose, 16-17; relation to actuality, 18-19, 21; poetic element, 19-20, 298-299; foreshadowed in *Ancren Riwle*, 275; three main periods, 297-298; where its history begins, 299. See also Fiction
Novellieri, 297
Nutt, A., 96*n*, 156; *Studies in the Legend of the Holy Grail*, 321; *Popular Studies in Mythology, Romance, and Folk-lore*, 321

OBERON, 211, 220-223
Oesterley, H., 262
Oliver, 211
Onesicritus, 29, 33
Ordoñez de Montalvo, García, *Amadis de Gaula*, 251
Orfeo, 135
Oriana, 253, 257
Oriental fables and folk-tales, 217, 220, 235, 244, 263, 271
Oriental influences, 286
Orson. See *Valentyne and Orson*
Ortuñez de Calahorra, Diego, *Espejo de Príncipes y Cavalleros*, 254-255
Outremeuse, Jean d', *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, 60, 279-285, 323; extracts from Cotton MS., 282-285; extracts from Egerton MS., 285; *Geste de Liége*, 280; *Myreur des Histors*, 280
Ovid, influence on Chrétien and others, 109
Owain, 95, 131
Owlglass. See *Howleglass*

PALLADIUS of Galatia, 32, 34, 39
Palmerin, 249, 250
Palmerin de Oliva, 253-255
Panchatantra, 263-265
Paris, Gaston, 96-97, 100, 105, 121, 125, 220; works on mediæval romance, 321
Paris, Paulin, 151, 230
Paris and Vienne, 219, 322
Parson of Kalenborowe, The, 292
Partenay. See *Romance of Partenay*
Parzival. See Eschenbach, W. von
Pater, W., *Marius the Epicurean*, 49
Paul and Thecla, 45-46
Pauli, Johannes, *Schimpf und Ernst*, 292
Pauphilet, A., *Études sur la queste du Saint Graal*, 321
Paynell, Thomas, *Treasurie of Amadis of Fraunce*, 251, 254
Peacock, Thomas Love, *Misfortunes of Elphin*, 95
Pembroke, Earl of. See Marshall, William
Perceval. See Eschenbach, W. von
Perceval, ou le Conte del Graal, 96, 123
Perceval le Gallois, prose romance. See *Perlesvaus*
Percival legend, 111, 123-131, 150, 151, 157, 162-163, 164, 247
Peredur, 96, 129-131, 135, 156, 157
Perilous Isle, 254

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Perion, king of Gaula, 253
Perlesvaus, 133, 162, 320
Pepin, 246
Petit Artus de Bretaigne, Le, 257
Petit de Julleville, L., *Histoire de la Langue et de la Littérature Française*, 320
Petrie, Prof. Flinders, 69*n*.
Petronius Arbiter, 40-41
Petrus Alphonsus, *Alphonsus de Clericali Disciplina*, 271*n*.
Petrus Comestor, *Historia Scholastica*, 261; *Allegoriæ*, 261
Pfarrer von Kalenberg, 292
Phædrus, 260-261, 265
Philip of Flanders, Count, 128, 158
Philostratus, Flavius, 27, 34
Philostratus the Lemnian, 26-28
Pictorial method in Anglo-Saxon literature, 61
Pierce the Fair, 123
Pilpai. See Bidpai
Plato's Atlantis, 36, 38; vision of Er, 38
Plutarch's *Ogygia*, 39
Poema del Cid, 250
Poetic element in fiction, 17-20
Poetry, relations of novel to, 298-299
Poggio, 265, 288
Ponthieu, La Comtesse de, 286
Ponthus and Galyce, 245
Popular tales, 259-294
Pordenone, Odoric de, 280
Porphyry, 34
Pothières, Abbey of, 209, 210
Pressyne. See Elynas
Prester John, 244
Prodicus, Choice of Hercules, 38
Prose romance, 148-207
Pseudo-Callisthenes, 29-33, 280; *De Rebus in Oriente Mirabilibus*, 60
Psychological method, 138
Pwyll, Prince of Dyved, 88-89
Pythagoras, lives of, 33-34

Quatre Filz Aymon. See *Four Sons of Aymon*
Queen Eleanor's Confession, 122
Queste del Saint Graal, La, 151, 162-163, 164; extracts, 164-171, 198-200, 320
Quixote, Don, 254-255

RAIN-MAKING ceremonies, 125*n*.
Raleigh, Professor Sir Walter, on origin of romance, 49; *The English Novel*, 317
Rastell, John, 288
Realism in fiction, 16, 18-21, 172, Chap. X., 259-294 *passim*, 299; in art and in literature, 311-316
Realistic novel, 293
Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye, 23, 229
Red Book of Hergest, 87, 320
Redborne, 258
Reeve, Clara, 13
Renaud de Montauban. See *Four Sons of Aymon*
Reynard the Fox, 261, 281, 287, 314
Reynier, Gustave, 286*n*., 293; *Le Roman Sentimental avant l'Astrée*, 317
Rhys, Sir John, 73-74, 76, 84, 94-95, 103, 155-156; *Studies in the Arthurian Legend*, 321
Richardson, S., 299
Rig-Veda, 159
Rimenhild, 244
Ritual theory of Grail, 154-161
Robert of Gloucester, 74, 81, 319
Robert the Devil, 292
Robin Hood, 292
Robinson, Richard, 262
Rochester "Wheel of Fortune," 311
Rohde, Erwin, *Der griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer*, 317
Roi Flore et la belle Jehane, Le, 286
Roland, 217
Roland, Chanson de, 208
Roman d'Alixandre, 32-33
Roman d'aventure, 211, 235, 250
Roman de la Rose, 256
Romance, origin, 23-24; mediæval, 295, 298, 300; process of growth, 304-305
Romance of Kynge Apollyn of Thyre, The, 318
Romans of Partenay, 239-244, 322; extract, 242-244
Romulus, 260
Roncesvaux, 217
Rotelande, Hue de, *Ipomedon*, 245, 249; *Prothesilaus*, 249
Round Table, 73, 77, 78, 79, 152, 253
Ruthwell cross, 306
Ruy Diaz, 250

SACCHETTI, *Novelette*, 288
St Michael's Mount. See Giant of
Saint Sang relic, 162
Sainte-More, Benoît de, *Roman de Troie*, 109, 229
Saints in sculpture, 310-316
Saints' lives, 46-48, 53-54, 210, 273-279, 318. See also Ælfric

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Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri

Saintsbury, George, works on mediæval fiction, 317
Samson, St, 74
San Pedro, Diego de, *Cárcel de Amor*, 256; *Arnalte e Lucenda*, 256*n*.
Sancgreal. See Graïl
Saracens, wars with, 217
Satire, 125; first appearance in Chrétien, 119; in *Mandeville's Travels*, 280; in comic tales, 286-293
Scandinavian influences in art, 306
Schofield, W. H., *English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer*, 317
Scoggin's Geystes, 293
Scudder, Vida D., *Le Morte d'Arthur of Sir Thomas Malory*, 321
Scudéry, Mademoiselle de, 111, 117
Sculpture, comparison with contemporary fiction, 306-316; Gothic, 309
Seafarer, The, 62
Seinte Marharete, the Meiden and Martyr, 323; extract, 276
Seven Sages of Rome, The, 287
Seven Wise Masters, The, 287
Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, 289; *Pericles*, 57
Shaw, G. B., *Arms and the Man*, 290
Shepherd of Hermas, 45
Short story, 259-294; in Middle Ages, 295, 305; in Tudor period, 296
Sidney, Sir Philip, 13, 297; *Arcadia*, 255
Sigurd Orm-i-Auga or Sigurd Anguis-Oculus, 104*n*.
Sindbad the Sailor, 223*n*.
Sir Ferumbras, 217
Sir Launfal, 100, 135
Sir Tristrem, 107
Somerset. See Summer Country
Sommer, Dr, 121, 148, 150-151, 191
Son of the Widow Lady, 123
Southey, Robert, 250, 273
Sowdone of Babylon, The, 217
Spanish romance, 249-258
Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, 116, 122
Stevenson, R. L., on the novel, 14-18
Stoddart, F. A., *The Evolution of the English Novel*, 317
Strassburg, Gottfried von, *Tristan*, 102, 107
Suddene, King of, 244
Summer Country, 76
Symbolism. See Allegory
Syr Gawayne and the Grene Knyghte, 152-153, 172, 311, 321
Syr Percevelle of Galles, 129
Swan Knight. *See* Helyas

TABLES, magic, 79*n*.
Tagore, Sir Rabindra Nath, 21*n*.
Taliesin, 75, 87, 95, 253; *Spoils of Annwynn*, 75
Taliesin, Book of, 155
Tammuz, 158-159
Tannhaüser legend, 125
Tarlton's Jests, 293
Ten Brink, Bernard, *History of English Literature*, 318
Tennyson, version of *Tristan*, 102, 107; *Marriage of Geraint* and *Geraint and Enid*, 112-113, 115; *Enid and Geraint*, 116; *Gareth and Lynette*, 130-131; *Idylls of the King*, 122, 193-194
Teutonic folk-tales, 211, 220
Thackeray, 299
Theagenes and Chariclea, 41
Thèbes, 109
Thecla, St, 45-46
Thomas, St, 313
Thomas, Anglo-Norman poet, 244; *Le Roman de Tristan*, 83-85, 100-107, 320
Thomas, Henry, *Spanish and Portuguese Romances of Chivalry*, 318
Thomas of Reading, 293
Thornton *Morte Arthure*, 81, 82, 122, 172-179, 191, 200, 311, 321; extracts, 174, 175-177, 200-201
Three Kings of Cologne, The, 244, 322
Three Kings' Sons, The, 246, 322
Till Eulenspiegel. See Howleglass
Transubstantiation, 154, 162
Tressan, Count de, 258
Tristan, 95, 192
Tristan. See Béroul; Thomas; Borron; Freiburg, H. von; Eschenbach, W. von
Tristan, prose version, 151, 191
Tristan and Iseult, 77, 100, 135, 193-194; allusion in *Huon of Bordeaux*, 221; summary of story, 101-102
Tristan and Iseult, 109
Trojan romances, 25-28, 229-234
Troubadours, 109
Troy, cycle of, 25-28, 229-234
Troynt, the boar. See Twrch Trwyth
Turheim, Ulrich von, version of *Tristan*, 107
Turning Castle, 123

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Twelve Peers of Charlemagne, 211, 217, 246
Twine, Lawrence, *Patterne of Painsfull Adventures*, 60
Two Lovers, The, 98-99
Twrch Trwyth, 66, 93-94
Tyl Eulenspiegel. See *Howleglass*
Tyler, Margaret, 254
Tyolet, 134, 135

UNDERHILL, J. G., *Spanish Literature in the England of the Tudors*, 318
Urfé, D', *Astrée*, 257
Uther Pendragon, 74, 150
Utopias, 36-39

VALE PERILOUS in Mandeville, 282
Valentyne and Orson, 246
Valerius. See Pseudo-Callisthenes
Vásquez, Francisco, 253
Vézelay, Abbey of, 209, 210
Viking influence. See Norse influence
Vincent de Beauvais. See Beauvais
Virgil, 109; lives of, 35
Virginity motive, 47-48
Vita Girardi, 210
Vita Merlini, 75
Viterbo, Godfrey of, *Pantheon*, 60
Vitry, Jacques de, *Exempla*, 261
Vivien, 211, 212
Voragine, Jacopo de, *Legenda Aurea*, 274
Vortigern, 65, 67, 76
Vortimer, 65
Voyage de Charlemagne, 216
Vulgate versions of Arthurian romance, 148-163, 320

WACE, Robert, 75, 77, 78, 81, 83, 121, 122, 124; *Geste des Bretons* or *Brut d'Angleterre*, 78, 319; *Roman de Rou*, 78; *Brut*, extract, 201-202, 319
Wagner, 107, 112, 158
Wakefield, the Pindar of, 292
Walter of Oxford. See Gualter
Wanderer, The, 51, 62
Ward, A. W., and Waller, A. R., *The Cambridge History of English literature*, 318
Ward, H. L. D., and Herbert, J. A., *A Catalogue of romances in . . . . the British Museum*, 318
Warren, Prof. F. M., 13
Wars of Alexander, 33
Wauchier de Denain, 85, 152, 157, 158, 161, 162; contribution to Chrétien's *Perceval le Gallois*, 128
Weddynge of Syr Gawayne, 152
Well of Case, 123
Wells, Professor J. E., 246; *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, 318
Wells sculpture, 309, 312, 313, 314
Welsh origin of Arthurian legend. See Insular theory
Welsh poetry, ancient, 67
Welsh triads, 86
Westminster, Painted Chamber, 314; sculpture, 310
Weston, Jessie L., 84*n*., 121*n*., 148, 151-152, 157, 160-161; works on Arthurian romance, 321
Whiteford, R. N., *Motives in English Fiction*, 318
Wieland's *Oberon*, 221
Willem's *Reinaert*, 287
William of Malmesbury, *De Gestis Regum Anglorum*, 67-68, 71, 319
William of Newburgh, 76
Wilmotte, Professor Maurice, 109, 212; *L'Évolution du Roman Français*, 322
Wilson, J. Dover, 224*n*.
Winchester school of illuminators, 308
Wivre, the, 137
Wonders of the East, 31, 60, 282, 307
Wood, A. C. *Fulk Fitz-Warin*, 322
Wright, Thomas, *Fulk Fitz Warine*, extracts, 237-238
Wright's Chaste Wife, The, 287
Wynkyn de Worde, 219, 244, 245, 246, 248, 262, 287

XENOPHON, 35-36, 38, 235
Xenophon of Ephesus, *Ephesiaca*, 41

YVAIN (Ywain), 79, 95-96, 193
Yvain. See Chrétien de Troyes
Yvain and Gwain, 127

ZATZIKHOVEN, Ulrich von, *Lanzelet*, 120
Zimmer, 85, 105
Zola, Émile, 16-17

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